ON BEING TENTATIVE IN THEOLOGY:
THE THOUGHT OF IAN T. RAMSEY

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation seeks to resolve the problem of understanding the thought of Ian Thomas Ramsey (1915-1972) as a whole. Many commentators have noted that Ramsey, one-time Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion at Oxford, and later Bishop of Durham, England, never drew his work together in a single place. Although his thought has been criticized in journal articles and previous dissertations, no single work has used all of the Ramsey corpus to evaluate his philosophy of religion. Most commentators have taken Ramsey's thought as a timeless whole.

However, examination of numerous unpublished manuscripts and typescripts, covering a period from 1938 to 1972, yields an explanation of the failure of previous interpreters: Ramsey's works are not pieces of a timeless whole; rather, his thought evolved from a close imitation of his idealist teachers in Cambridge to a position he called a "broadened empiricism." These sources, among his papers in Durham, England, make possible a new understanding of Ramsey's work.

This study highlights the complexity of the man in a biographical sketch that forms the first chapter. The map of his journey is laid out in the next three chapters on the evolution of his notion of the self, his concept of experience as encounter, and his discussions of the rela-

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tion between experience and language (which appear primarily in the unpublished papers). Chapter Four concludes with an analysis of Ramsey's "cosmic disclosure situation." Ramsey's main contribution to the philosophy of religion and theology is discussed in the fifth and sixth chapters where his theory of the structure and use of religious language is analyzed. The seventh chapter investigates his theories of the justification of religious language, and the eighth shows how some work done in the English-speaking tradition of philosophy by Jonathan Edwards and William James can be taken into Ramsey's theories of justification to clarify the theory.

Specifically, this study analyzes the influence of George Berkeley and Gilbert Ryle on Ramsey's thought. It notes for the first time that Ramsey abandoned the category "key words" after 1960 as one of the categories for primary religious language (i.e., talk of God or the ultimate). It shows that his major category of primary religious language, qualified models, has five functions (reference, representation, contextualization, evocation, and licensing further discourse). It discovers that Ramsey used certain rules to guide the sorts of language legitimately derived from primary religious language and to criticize illegitimate discourse. It shows that his theory of the justification of religious language is not limited to an impirical justificatory thesis (his theory of empirical fit), but also includes a rational or metaphysical justificatory thesis, and a general defensive justificatory thesis. This study argues that Ramsey's position entails a principle of fallibility, i.e., that not only

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is it logically possible that any of my (non-analytic) beliefs may be wrong, but also that such a principle is a necessary correlative and corrective to any and every religious belief or ultimate claim.

Generally, this study finds that Ramsey's basic tactic for elucidating the logic of religious utterance, that of examining questions about religious beliefs as questions about the justifiability of the language in which they are expressed, avoids confusing problems of meaning with problems of reference. It claims that a Ramseyan approach to problems of religious language commits one to clarifying and justifying one's own beliefs and those of one's community, by showing that the teachings, doctrines, ethos, actions, and beliefs which one and one's community holds *are* important, but *not* ultimate. The virtues of Ramsey's work are capitulated in his claim that one can be sure in religion, but must be tentative in theology.

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INTRODUCTION

The general purpose of this dissertation is to examine critically the thought of Ian T. Ramsey. Ramsey's work has received considerable attention in journal articles and dissertations over the last fifteen years.[1] Most of these have concentrated exclusively on his theory of religious language and have assumed that his major contribution to the philosophical literature was fundamentally complete in his book *Religious Language*.[2] I will show that assumption to be false.

The problem that this study seeks to resolve is the problem of understanding Ramsey's thought as a whole. How can one square his early *description* of an individual in terms of a "Timeless Self" and "empirical data of 'mind and body'"[3] with his claim that we *cannot describe* ourselves?[4] How can one square his claim that metaphysics is a "kata-language," a language whose words can be used by all languages, but

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[1] These are cited in Section Two of the Bibliography.

[2] (London: SCM Press, 1957; New York: MacMillan, 1963). All citations in this work are to the latter edition.

[3] Cf. Ramsey, "Man and Religion: Individual and Community," *Library of the Tenth International Congress of Philosophy* (Amsterdam, August 11-18, 1948); Volume I: *Proceedings of the Congress* (Amsterdam: North Hollands Publishing Co., 1949), 425-26.

[4] Cf. Ramsey, "The Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'," *Philosophical Quarterly* V, 20 (July, 1955), 195.

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common to none,[5] with his claim that science could, in principle, provide the integrative concepts metaphysics needs?[6] How could the man who claimed that it was right to make theology "verbal"[7] also have spoken disparagingly of language as "only a map" and of the inadequacy of language to fact?[8] Most importantly, how can one square the claims that without some contextual setting the word "God" is meaningless,[9] and that God is all that matters and the only thing of which we can be sure?[10] Until these apparently contradictory data are accounted for, Ramsey's theory of religious language and his philosophical theology in general cannot be understood as a whole.

Commentators have not been able to solve these problems in any way that does justice to Ramsey's expressions or intentions. One construed his work as attempting to construct an ontology of the unobservable,[11] while another berated him for not abandoning his empiricism and constructing an alternative metaphysical system.[12] Is Ramsey a rationalist or an empiricist? Or neither? Some interpret his work as non-cognitive or fideist,[13] while others assert that Ramsey's thought included criteria for rational assessment of religious claims.[14] Which is it? Other interpreters have construed him to be a virtual atheist,[15] and understood his work as making Christianity safe for vague thinking,[16] although both claims are difficult to maintain even on a superficial reading of his works.

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[5] Cf. Ramsey, *Miracles: An Exercise in Logical Mapwork* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952); reprinted in *The Miracles and the Resurrection*, SPCK Theological Collections 3 (London: S.P.C.K., 1964), 1-30.

[6] Cf. Ramsey, "On the Possibility and Purpose of a Metaphysical Theology," *Prospect for Metaphysics*, ed. I. T. Ramsey (London: Allen and Unwin, 1961), 162.

[7] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 215.

[8] Ramsey, *Miracles*, 29.

[9] Ramsey, *Christian Discourse: Some Logical Explorations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 82.

[10] Ramsey, *On Being Sure in Religion* (London: Athlone Press, 1963), 21.

[11] C. B. Cohen, "Some Aspects of Ian Ramsey's Empiricism," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* III, 1 (Spring, 1972), 3.

No previous study has been able to make sense of Ramsey's work *in toto*. However, a number have shed some important light on some aspects of his thought. One emphasized his metaphysical method,[17] others have commented helpfully on his theories of religious language,[18] and a few have simply laid out the constituent parts of his theory without extensive laboring over criticism or construction.[19] The best understanding of Ramsey's work yet published, that of Donald Evans, attempted to provide a comprehensive picture by putting together the jig-saw puzzle pieces to form a picture, and noted correctly that "Ramsey often remedies obscurities and defects in one book or article by dealing with them in another."[20] Yet Evans did not see the evolution in Ramsey's thought as a way of overcoming obscurities in his position. He construed Ramsey's work as a species of philosophy that justifies 'God-talk,' but Ramsey was more than a philosopher of theistic language.

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[12] Brian Hebblethwaite, "The Philosophical Theology of I. T. Ramsey: Some Further Reflections," *Theology*, LXXVI (December, 1973), 639*ff*.

[13] James F. Harris, "Models and Qualifiers," *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* III (Summer, 1972); Paul van Buren, *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1963), ch. four; J.C.A. Gaskin, "Disclosures," *Religious Studies* IX (1973), 131-41.

[14] J. W. McClendon and J. M. Smith, "Ian Ramsey's Model of Religious Language: A Qualified Appreciation," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* XLI, 3 (September, 1973), and *Understanding Religious Convictions* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975), ch. two.

[15] Ninian Smart, "The Intellectual Crisis of British Christianity," *Theology* LXVIII (January, 1965).

[16] Ted Bastin, "Models and Mystery," *Theoria to Theory* I, 3 (April, 1967), 263.

[17] Norbert O. Schedler, "Methodology in the Metaphysics of Theism: A Philosophical Analysis of Austin Farrer and Ian Ramsey" (Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton, 1967). In light of the fact that Ramsey abandoned the attempt to construct a metaphysics after 1960, Schedler's work is only of historical interest.

In sum, neither the understanding of Ramsey as a fideist, as a Christian apologist, as a proponent of inadequate empiricism, as a metaphysician, as an analyst of theistic language, nor as a virtual atheist can suffice for the comprehension of Ramsey's work, nor can they account for all of its parts. The fundamental problem is that most of Ramsey's interpreters have taken Ramsey's corpus as a timeless whole.

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[18] McClendon and Smith, *op. cit.*; William H. Austin, "Models, Mystery and Paradox in Ian Ramsey," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* VIII, 1 (Spring, 1968); H. P. Owen, "The Philosophical Theology of I. T. Ramsey," *Theology* LXXIV (February, 1971).

[19] J. H. Gill, "Ian Ramsey's Interpretation of Christian Language" (Ph.D. dissertation, Duke, 1966); The Rev. J. J. McCluskey, M.H.M., "Theology and Disclosure Models: An Interpretation and Critique of Ian Ramsey's Writings" (Ph.D. dissertation, Notre Dame, 1969). The main contributions of C. B. Cohen's dissertation, "The Logic and Ontology of Ian Ramsey's Theory of Religious Language" (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia, 1970) are extracted in her articles.

[20] Donald D. Evans, "Ian Ramsey on Talk About God," *Religious Studies* VII (1971), 125-40, 213-26.

The explanation for this failure is at hand: no one has had the full Ramsey corpus to study. Interpreters have been limited to Ramsey's published works and most have not even accounted for all of them. But there exist in England hundreds of pages of manuscripts and typescripts which substantially complement the published works and permit a new and significantly different interpretation of Ramsey. In preparing this study, I spent time in England in 1974 to canvass Ramsey's literary remains, and to interview his widow and his former associates. Outstanding among the remains are the 1938 Burney Prize Essay, "The Concept of the Eternal"; a 1939 manuscript, "Revelation"; a thirty-nine page single-spaced, legal-sized, mimeographed essay, "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," which dates from the mid-1940's; a short mimeographed study preliminary to *Religious Language*, "Theology and Language: Some Illustrative Examples," which dates from about 1953; a long typescript (*c*. 250 single-spaced pages) which was a draft for Ramsey's projected "Fact, Metaphysics and God," and which dates from the late 1950's (with some parts possibly later).[21] There is also a typescript of a monograph, "The Problem of Evil," unrevised at the time of Ramsey's death.[22] These sources, together with the interviews, make possible a new understanding of Ian Ramsey.

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[21] Details of the dating and contents of these will be found in the bibliography. Also among Ramsey's remains are numerous lecture notes, mimeographed lecture handouts, sermon notes, and letters. Those few that are used will be noted in the bibliography.

[22] Although edited by Ramsey's literary executor, this is still unpublished.

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The solution to the problem of understanding Ramsey's work which I propose in this dissertation will account for all the data noted previously while remaining faithful to Ramsey's expressions and intentions. Ramsey's work shows his complexity. He travelled a rather tortuous road from a slavish imitation of his earliest idealist guides (Ewing and Bradley) to a position of broadened empiricism that connected with the tradition of British empiricism beginning with Locke, Berkeley and Hume. Ramsey saw that Bertrand Russell, Gilbert Ryle and John L. Austin, among other travellers on the highway of empiricism, had made so much progress that he joined them on that road, forsaking his earlier idealism. He did not follow those, such as Ayer and Flew, whose empirical speed barely accounted for the ground they passed over. He worked in the tradition of Berkeley and the American pragmatists, following the lane travelled by Austin, Ryle, Strawson and Hare. His own version of empiricism, a notionalized empiricism, owed much not only to Berkeley, but to Ryle; not only to Locke, but also to Russell. He took account of the work of his fellow-travellers and was critically aware of those who travelled on other roads, especially the one he had left. Ramsey's attempt to stake a claim for the faith dimension is understandable only in light of his beginnings and his journey.

In this study, the complexity of the man is highlighted in a short biographical sketch that forms Chapter One; the beginning, direction, and length of the road he travelled will be evident in the following three chapters, as will the influence of his fellow-travellers and forebears. His own contribution to the progress in the moderate lane of the empirical road is discussed in Chapters Five and Six; these lay out his theory of religious language in greater detail than ever before. The seventh chapter analyzes his theories of the justification of religious language and the eighth shows how some work done in the English-speaking tradition of philosophy and theology by such luminaries as Jonathan Edwards and William James, although some have supposed their insights to be superseded, can be taken up into Ramsey's theories of the justification of religious language. The ninth and final chapter surveys the results of attending to Ramsey's work in line with his own intentions, his expressions and his journey.

Admittedly, this study undertakes a large task that may be complemented by further studies in Ramsey's work. But the present task is a necessary one, for the details are not intelligible apart from the shape of the whole, as the failures of previous interpreters show. Since there has been no presentation of his work that accounts for all the facts, I offer this to show how Ramsey rightly claimed that one could be tentative in theology while being sure in religion.[23]

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[23] When this study was undergoing its final revisions, I was surprised and gratified to receive from Jerry Gill a copy of his *Ian Ramsey: To Speak Responsibly of God*, Contemporary Religious Thinkers Series, general editor, H. D. Lewis (London: Allen and Unwin, 1976). This does indeed bring together the major themes of Ramsey's thought. After a discussion of logical positivism and theological responses to it, Gill devotes over half of his text to discussing the major themes in Ramsey's published works, and concludes with a brief appraisal.

An apparent defect of this interpretation is that it treats Ramsey's thought as a timeless whole (with the exception of his work on the self;

cf. Gill, 155). It is basically unchanged from his dissertation (see note 19 above) except that Gill has revised the content of his appraisal. In the earlier work, he had urged some Polanyian categories to clarify Ramsey's work; in the later he discusses some of the early and recent criticisms of Ramsey's work. Generally, Gill treats the major themes in Ramsey's work in an interesting way, but does not (and did not attempt to) produce an integrated and systematic presentation.

CHAPTER ONE

IAN RAMSEY: BRIDGE BUILDER

I

Ian Thomas Ramsey was born to Mary and Arthur Ramsey on 31 January 1915 in Kearsley, Lancashire.[1] His father worked in the post office before and after World War I. During the war while his father was in the army, Mary Ramsey also worked there. While the Ramseys apparently were not dirt-poor, he was a child "from humble circumstances, never asking for sweets or a toy."[2] The area in which he grew up was severely affected by the labor strikes of 1911 and 1912 and by the post-war unemployment that struck the country in 1922 and that deepened during the depression that began in 1929.[3]

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[1] The only available biography of Ramsey is a short study published a year after his death by David Edwards, *Ian Ramsey: Bishop of Durham: A Memoir* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973). Where this is my source, I will make no further citation, except to acknowledge direct quotations.

During a research trip to England in 1974 I interviewed Harry McClatchey, Margaret Ramsey (Ian's wife), Mary Ramsey (his mother), Basil Mitchell, Peter Baelz, F. W. Dillistone, David Edwards, Douglas Jones, and Maud Harrison.

Although they reflected his personality, Ramsey's publications were rarely explicitly autobiographical. Those few that are will be cited in what follows.

The chief source for a Ramsey biography has not been made public. Margaret Ramsey reported that every day of their married life Ian faithfully spent ten or fifteen minutes at the end of the day writing in a journal. These journals, each volume spanning five years, are being kept by Mrs. Ramsey.

[2] Edwards, *Memoir*, 17.

Although Ian was devoted to his parents and their values, his attitudes were formed by Protestant society in Lancashire as well, according to his life-long friend and literary executor Harry McClatchey. The important thing in that society was "to get on academically,"[4] if one could. If one had a job, one was lucky and one did it to the best of one's ability. In Lancashire the employment situation left a lot of people with nothing to do. Ramsey was fortunate in that he was given something to do: he received a scholarship to Farnsworth Grammar School. Having gotten something, he had to make the most of it, as anyone with a job in Lancashire should. Not only did Ramsey remember the depression in the Lancashire of his youth, much of his character was formed in reaction to it. Although he may have inherited his driving energy from his mother and been secure in the love of his parents as their only child, the sight of many who were unable to realize their potential because they had no work to do remained a vivid reminder that any opportunity presented its fortunate recipient with a duty to make the most of it.[5]

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[3] Cf. W. E. Lunt, *History of England*, Third Edition (New York: Harper Bros., 1950), 769-73, 808-11; and Edwards, *Memoir*, 17-19.

[4] A. H. B. McClatchey, interview in the Rectory, Hartlebury, 19 October 1974.

[5] A. H. B. McClatchey, interview in the Rectory, Hartlebury, 9 November 1974. Cp. Edwards, *Memoir*, 17-19.

Beginning at the Farnsworth Grammar School in 1925, Ramsey was a good student and active in extracurricular activities. After two years there he led his form in Latin and "gained 'distinctions' in what would now be his O levels in pure mathematics and physics as well as in English and Latin, and in what would now be his A levels in pure and applied mathematics and chemistry, with good marks in physics."[6] In October 1933 he received a State Scholarship and a Lancashire County Council Scholarship to matriculate at Cambridge.

He had intended at Cambridge to become a mathematical physicist or to prepare to enter the civil service. He was not especially concerned with the Church or theology when he entered. He kept his expenses quite low, living far from his college, Christ's. His distant lodgings, his Lancashire accent, and his status as a "scholarship boy" contributed to a somewhat lonely existence. In March, 1934, he was sent to the Papworth Sanitorium with tuberculosis. David Edwards wrote:

> Above all, in the Papworth Sanitorium Ian Ramsey was given back his life, and it is clear from what he said and wrote at the time that he regarded his recovery as a sign of the loving kindness of God. To his new-found friends [many of them Anglican ordinands who visited him at Papworth] he expressed what one of them has recalled as "the first youthful rapture of his spiritual awakening."[7]

Before he returned to his studies in Cambridge in October, 1935, he had decided to prepare for ordination in the Anglican Church.

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[6] Edwards, *Memoir*, 19.

[7] *Ibid.*, 21. Edwards attributed Ramsey's willingness to accept work later in his life as a result of this experience. On the other hand, for a Lancashire Protestant in a depression, every opportunity was a gift of God.

At Cambridge he achieved Firsts in Mathematics Tripos Part I and in Moral Science (philosophy) Part IIa. As Burney Student, he gained a Third First, this one with distinction, in the Philosophical section of the Theological Tripos Part II. At Cambridge his studies were directed by A. C. Ewing, and Ramsey's Burney Essay, "The Concept of the Eternal," reflects his director's philosophical idealism. He also attended G. E. Moore's lectures in 1938-39.[8] Most likely during this period Ramsey also acquired his first taste of Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Butler and Bertrand Russell, as well as Bradley, James Ward, John Oman and other idealists.

Ramsey prepared for ordination at Ripon Hall, Oxford. C. H. Dodd remembered at least one reason that Ramsey left Cambridge for Oxford,

> Ramsey considered that the challenge that religious propositions were nonsense should be taken up. His hope was that by working himself in the new philosophy he would be able to construct a new apologetic for Christianity taking account of all that they were saying, employing their methods but showing their presuppositions up as arbitrary--a notable example of a man setting himself to prepare the role he was to fulfill.[9]

Ramsey was ordained in 1940 and held a curacy in Headington Quarry near Oxford. There he met Margaret McKay and married her in 1943.

In 1943 he returned as Chaplain to his old college, Christ's, Cambridge. That year he wrote a letter to *The Times* (London) *Literary Supplement* in defense of a position of C. E. Raven, who had been criticized by a reviewer. The letter ends with a bit of doggerel that reveals his philosophical outlook at that time: "With the moon of Wittgenstein on the wane, the sun of Berkeley may shine again."[10] In 1944 he became a Fellow and Director of Studies in Theology and Moral Science. In 1944 he was named a University Lecturer in Divinity and Canon Theologian of Leicester Cathedral. In 1949 he became a Tutor.

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[8] Notes from these lectures are preserved among Ramsey's papers in Bishop Auckland. He also refers to these lectures in "Fact, Metaphysics and God." I do not know that Ramsey went to Wittgenstein's "seances" but if he did, he did not attend regularly.

[9] Quoted in Edwards, *Memoir*, 23. It is not clear why (or that) Ramsey had to leave Cambridge for Oxford to study the "new antimetaphysical philosophy."

David Edwards described Ramsey's work and situation during World War II, in the following:

> Christ's was not an easy situation... One problem for Ramsey was that there was a war on. As Master, [Charles Earle] Raven attracted to Christ's a number of undergraduates who shared his pacifism. This gave some of the more patriotic dons a fresh reason for criticizing him. The new Chaplain was in a quiet way a pacifist; but he tactfully avoided being a mere echo of the Master, and always listed in *Who's Who* the appointment which he held as College ARP and Fire Officer, 1943-5.[11]

Peter Baelz recalled that Ramsey was strongly influenced by Bradley, Berkeley, Raven, Whitehead, and (to some degree) by William Temple, although Ramsey differed with each. At Cambridge he was considered a first-rate person and teacher, although in ecclesiastical circles some considered him a "theological and ecclesiastical imp."[12] But this was not entirely accurate, for Ramsey didn't correspond to the role one established for him. Rather, he embodied the beliefs that the person was more than the role and was not reducible even to an infinite number of roles.

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[10] *Times Literary Supplement*, 1943, p. 259. I owe this reference to F. W. Dillistone.

[11] Edwards, *Memoir*, 25.

[12] P. R. Baelz interview in Christ Church, Oxford, 23 October 1974.

The influence of idealism on Ramsey's thought at this time is especially noticeable in his "Outline of Christian Philosophy," apparently the "39 foolscap pages of stencilled lecture notes from Ramsey" received by one of his students just before Christmas, 1946.[13] In that document, the main available record of his position in his Cambridge days, he developed a position quite dependent on Berkeley. The only references to recent empiricism were negative. In 1949, however, the publication of Gilbert Ryle's monograph, *The Concept of Mind*, apparently changed that emphasis. The influence of Ryle's work on Ramsey's thought is significant.[14]

In 1949 he also was interviewed for the professorship at Nottingham. Upon the completion of the interview, he cabled Margaret: "Not appointed, but not disappointed."[15] When L. W. Grensted retired from the Nolloth Chair at Oxford, Ramsey applied for it and was appointed in 1951.[16] As Oxford's Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion and Fellow of Oriel College, Ramsey did his most creative work. Yet this work was not limited to his published writings. It also included his work with students in lecture-hall and seminar-room. Dr. Donald Evans said:

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[13] Edwards, *Memoir*, 27.

[14] This will be taken up in Chapter Two, below.

[15] Margaret Ramsey interview in Trumpington, 11 November 1974.

[16] Although Edwards claimed that Ramsey refused the chair until it was thrown open to non-Anglicans, Margaret Ramsey was not aware of any initial refusal.

> I was always more impressed by his ability to discover plans or possibilities in others, than by his own work. I often thought that if he had devoted less time and energy to me and countless others, and more to his own work, it would have been immeasurably better. One of the reasons why I wrote my *Religious Studies* articles about him was that I felt he had not done justice to himself.[17]

In addition to his teaching responsibilities, he took on numerous other tasks both within and without the college, often working in his rooms in Oriel until midnight. He was especially active in groups "meeting in London and elsewhere to discuss aspects of the Church of England's social responsibility."[18] His journey to America in 1963 not only took him and his family (he and Margaret had two sons, Paul and Vivian) from Toronto to the Yukon, but also produced a number of articles and an important book, *Models and Mystery*. While at Oxford he also was a member of the "Metaphysicals," an informal discussion group,[19] and took notice of what he called the "broadening of recent empiricism" in the work of his colleagues, Hare, Austin, Strawson, and Hampshire.

Ramsey was appointed Bishop of Durham in 1966. In the immediately previous years Ramsey had been offered some other crown appointments, but had refused them. He accepted Durham at the urging of Michael Ramsey. The Ramseys lived in Auckland Castle also at the Archbishop's behest. Although it involved much adjustment, the Ramseys grew to enjoy

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[17] Quoted in Edwards, *Memoir*, 54.

[18] *Ibid.*, 58.

[19] The group existed before he arrived; he was a late-comer. The other members of the group published some of their papers as *Faith and Logic*, ed. Basil Mitchell (London: Allen and Unwin, 1957).

Auckland and to use it fully, even though they did not have a private income to help support it. When a Church commissioner wanted to take over part of it for the University of Durham, Ramsey resisted; the diocesan offices were, however, installed in what had been dungeons.

But Ian Ramsey and the Diocese of Durham fit each other. Durham was not a rich diocese; a well-off church would not be the appropriate background for the left-wing ideas on economic, moral and political issues that Ramsey would propose or support (especially in the House of Lords). In Durham, "Church life reflected a surrounding depression which was largely caused by the contraction of the basic industries of coalmining and shipbuilding."[20] Durham did offer a position to Ramsey that enabled him to be active not only locally but nationally; the impression one gets of his administration of the diocese is one of administration by whirlwind. But this whirlwind often touched down in other spots where Ramsey attempted to bring first-rate minds together on committees and to convey a vision of what the authority, duty and responsibility of a Church were in a technological age.[21] His chief projects involved discussions and plans in the field of communicating religion generally and in religious education specifically. The few 'academic' articles stemming from this period are, nonetheless, of good quality and reflect the further evolution of his position.

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[20] Edwards, *Memoir*, 61.

[21] The various commissions, working parties and consultations in which Ramsey participated are discussed in Edwards, *Memoir*, chapters five and six.

In the Spring of 1972, Ramsey suffered a severe heart attack. During the summer months of that year he and Margaret relaxed, with Margaret nursing him back to health. She claimed that he was a model patient during his convalescence, being careful to follow his physician's orders. Although he hated it, he stuck to his diet fairly well. He was told he could return to normal activity, but apparently his doctors didn't realize what a frenetic pace his normal activity was.[22] He resumed his pace. His death occurred on 6 October 1972 during his "first journey to London alone on 'business as usual' since his severe heart attack on Easter Eve."[23] His ashes are in the chapel of Auckland Castle.

II

Ian Ramsey's way of life seemed to perplex a number of his acquaintances.[24] In Edwards' *Memoir*, one picture stands out from the rest as an attempt to bring that life into focus. Archbishop Michael Ramsey presented this in a fairly positive way:

> And in the office which he held never to say "no" means before long to lose the power of discrimination and to be living in a whirl of mental and physical movement. The whirl became the whirlwind which swept Ian, like Elijah of old, to Paradise.
>
> Yet perhaps if it were otherwise Ian would not be Ian. Perhaps the saying of "no" to any request of a fellow human being and the planning of priorities for himself were impossible for

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[22] Margaret Ramsey, interview in Trumpington 11 November 1974.

[23] Edwards, *Memoir*, 96.

[24] Cf. Edwards, *Memoir*, *passim*.

> one to whom any incidental encounter, any person met, could be a thrilling disclosure, a bursting forth of one of God's secrets. Such was the man...[25]

David Edwards picked this up in a more prosaic way:

> His chief limitation was that he did not insist on priorities. He lacked a sense of discrimination or proportion when responding to what he saw as need. While a bishop he had such a horror of being merely an official that he went to the opposite extreme and threw himself wholeheartedly into far too much.[26]

Both of these present a picture of a pudgy little man who heedlessly charged into every breach, whether important or not. Perhaps this accounts for the way he lived.

However, answers to questions like "Why does he do the things he does?" or "Why did he live the way he lived?" require that one begin, at least, by meeting a man on his own ground, by exploring his life and character in terms he could recognize, by seeing the reasons for his life as he saw them, and by understanding his acts as he might have understood them. I will be content here to show the implications of one of his fundamental beliefs as a way of seeing one of the reasons for his life's work as he saw it.

Ramsey confessed to at least one such belief in an informal essay published in 1969. He was concerned, especially in the context of the University, to

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[25] A. M. Ramsey, "Ian Ramsey: An Address at the Memorial Service in St. Margaret's, Westminster on Friday 17 November, 1972" in Edwards, *Memoir*, 100.

[26] Edwards, *Memoir*, 11.

> stake a claim for the faith dimension; and I was brought up a good empiricist and very much concerned with the empirical world and all the rigours of Russell and Moore and so on. I have never wanted to deny or despise the material world, but from first to last, I have always seen that in isolation and by itself a plain empiricism would not be sufficient either as an account of the world or of humanity. Now it seems to me that this is my basic, one could almost say, burning conviction.[27]

This claim has two aspects: first, the positive task of "staking a claim"; second, the negative evaluation of "plain empiricism." One way to begin an understanding of this claim is to see what Ramsey proposed in place of a plain empiricism.

Ramsey found the "self" of plain empiricism not sufficient to explain humanity. He opposed any sort of position that construed the "self" as an abstraction, especially bundle theories of the self. In his Burney Prize Essay of 1938 he had written:

> So long as our attention be confined to perceptual situations, there may be a methodological excuse in considering this self primarily as a passive onlooker who can, however, when occasionally convenient, squint, move, and get drunk.[28]

The evolution of his position on the self will be treated in the next chapter. Anticipating that discussion, I skip thirty-three years to note Ramsey's final position: "What we call *human* behaviour is an expression of that effective integrating activity which is peculiarly and distinctively ourselves."[29] Ramsey went on to distinguish the Christian person as one who effectively integrates his life in response to a certain sort of disclosure:

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[27] Ramsey, "Fullnes of Life" in *All One Body*, ed. Timothy Wilson (London: Darton, Longmans and Todd, 1969), 58.

[28] Ramsey, "The Concept of the Eternal," unpublished typescript, p. 57.

> Here, then, in a personality which each of us discovers in an active self-response to a disclosure of God's activity in Christ, is for the Christian that which unifies, that which is distinctive of each of us. This is that to which the word "soul" was meant to point; that which can be expressed in directed thought or bodily activity. Here is no metaphysical substructure or pin-cushion, no static centre, but that which we know in being active, in realizing ourselves. Here is the permanent complement of all scientific discourse, something implicit in all the strands of knowledge with which the natural and behavioural sciences supply us.
>
> If it be asked how this activist view of human personality accords with concepts like peace and quietness, as these occur in Christian contexts, the answer would be that while admittedly these have their obvious and more superficial meanings in certain situations when men find themselves the victims of strife and noisy turmoil nevertheless, insofar as quietness and peace have permanent significance in all circumstances for the Christian, they are to be understood in terms rather of unimpeded activity.[30]

Three key points emerge from this: a person is one who acts; a Christian person acts in response to God discerned in Christ; and peace is freedom to act. The first point expresses Ramsey's basic view of what it means to be human; the second, his view of what it means to be a Christian; and the third his view of what sort of situation is necessary for a person to be truly human.

Ramsey also found the external world of plain empiricism not sufficient to explain the fact that there is a world. Ramsey claimed, in an unpublished essay from 1946 or 1947, that the world is the arena in which we encounter the activity of God. He discussed this claim in a very Berkeleyan manner:

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[29] Ramsey, "Human Personality" in *Personality and Science: An Interdisciplinary Discussion* (A Ciba Foundation Report), ed. I. T. Ramsey and Ruth Porter (London: Churchill Livingstone, 1971), p. 128. Emphasis added.

[30] *Ibid.*, 131.

> The whole external world has a sacramental character--being a sacrament of God's will and presence. God and ourselves meet as personal wills in the external world, and it is in and through the world that God's presence will be seen, and his wishes known. The external world is not merely the "divine visual language" of Berkeley: it is also a divine inn, giving us opportunity to meet God and our fellow-men. All thought of God as somehow abdicating from the world, or of the world as merely the private playground of the devil is philosophically ill-founded. Rather is the external world the supreme channel of Grace...
>
> Further, we indicated above, at any rate in principle, how science and history were concerned with particular organisations of spatio-temporal abstractives. For that reason each may be regarded as a *religious* activity--for the abstractives which they organise are concreted in God's conational unity. So that science and history are, with their respective techniques, particular, though different endeavours to gain insight into the will of God...
>
> It has been the sweet reasonableness of theism to steer a middle course between a pantheism (such as that of Spinoza) which would confound the world and God, and a deism (such as that of Samuel Clark) which would relate God only loosely as "maker" of a world which he then, for the most part, contemplates from afar... What of our point of view?
>
> Clearly God is immanent--for the total external world is, literally, an abstractive part of God himself. Further, God is transcendent for we have, from the first, been keen to stress the duality of *all* experience and *a fortiori* that of the immediate Encounter. So that God objectifies, as it were, the external world and human personalities from himself. To this extent, *but to this extent only*, he stands apart.
>
> In something of the same way, we "stand apart" ourselves--we too can "objectify" (in conation) the Object with which we are confronted in the immediate Encounter. The same principles which safeguard God's transcendence can safeguard also human individuality...[31]

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[31] Ramsey, "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," n.d., mimeographed, pp. 24-25.

Over the next decade Ramsey abandoned this philosophically idealistic style of writing. But, he did not abandon the claim that the world acted upon us. In 1968 he claimed that "we do not ourselves make contact with, establish our hold on some 'hidden reality.' To suppose that is to make a myth-eaten error. Rather does the 'hidden Reality' establish contact with us by disclosing itself to us."[32] An individual's experience and the knowledge drawn from it is the result of being acted upon, whatever else may be involved.

Although it may be the case that God acts in every situation, one does not usually claim to perceive God in every bush and tree. But if one attends only to the bushes and the trees as plain facts, one will miss the forest. If one acts as though the ordinary, everyday and mechanical constituted the whole of life, one misses the richness of life, as Ramsey showed in the many stories that illustrate his works. In effect, Ramsey claimed that a plain empiricism missed God. The world is that place where human beings and God interact. Knowledge of the facts and features of the world is not sufficient to understand the world. More is needed, and that 'more' is the faith-dimension which can discern the activity of God.[33]

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[32] Ramsey, "Polanyi and J. L. Austin" in *Intellect and Hope: Essays in the Thought of Michael Polanyi*, ed. T. A. Langford and W. H. Poteat (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1968), p. 196.

[33] Cf. "Facts and Disclosures" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1972, pp. 115-33; reprinted in *Christian Empiricism*, ed. J.H. Gill (London: Sheldon Press and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 159-76. Citations to the latter.

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Staking a claim for the faith dimension involves more than proposing an alternative to a plain empiricism, whether that alternative be the idealism that Ramsey espoused in the 1940's or the broadened empiricism that constituted his final position. In line with his position that to be human is to act effectively and in line with his conviction that God could be disclosed in any situation, a practical commitment emerged. Dr. Hugh Major recalled that Ramsey, while at Ripon Hall, told him, "'I think that my ambition, Hugh, would be this: to try to build a bridge between theology and philosophy.'"[34] Some thirty years later, Ramsey also used that image in a discussion of episcopacy:

> There is another image for the office and work of a Bishop, and perhaps in our own day it is even more apt than that of shepherds. This is the image of Bishop as Pontifex--bridge-builder. In no sense does this image conflict with the image of the shepherd. For a bridge-builder today must guide rather than order and must ask rather than dictate. A Bishop must endeavour to be a bridge-builder in contemporary thought when, at the present time, we are reaping a harvest of centuries of neglect. For some centuries now we have, by and large, just not bothered to maintain or to re-establish communications between the world of scientific thinking on the one hand, and theological thinking on the other. He must try to be a bridge-builder in society, between its fragmented groups; a bridge-builder in the field of pastoral care so that the wisdom and skill and expertise of the many can come together in a common concern for those they serve; a bridge-builder in a fragmented Church; a bridge-builder in our political life. People may and do differ from me; I may aggravate some, and stir others to abuse--as with a recent correspondent who concluded his letter to me with the phrase "your would-be assassin." But still a Bishop must try to bridge build, to express the authority of the gospel, to create trust.[35]

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[34] Edwards, *Memoir*, 23.

[35] Ramsey, "The Bishop" in *St. Nicholas'* [Parish] *Magazine* (Durham), February, 1972, pp. 5-6.

The many bridges to be built are all bridges between people or bridges that will enable people to see and understand the activities of others.

The evidence Edwards collected for his *Memoir* and the few autobiographical statements Ramsey made point to a commitment to individuals as persons. Even in his writings, the examples of disclosures that have power are not those of mathematical disclosures or scientific disclosures, but interpersonal ones, especially the encounter between David and Nathan in 1 Samuel 12 to which Ramsey referred on many occasions. The evidence suggests that it was from other people that he drew his inspiration. He based his account of talk of God on the analogy of the actions of people. In a letter to Donald Evans he wrote:

> ...for my own position *activity* was the one word which could be used literally of God and ourselves--that here was the kind of bridge forged by St. Thomas by a doctrine of creativity, and which I certainly need if I am to give any answer whatever to those who would question whether I can really argue that I am saying anything reliable about what is objectively disclosed or not. For me, activity provides the one firm link in fact and language. Here again I think I learn a great deal from Berkeley.[36]

In the activity displayed by people there was a greater possibility of a disclosure of God to occur than in any other sort of work or situation. "Any person met," said Archbishop Michael Ramsey, "could be a thrilling disclosure, a bursting forth of one of God's secrets." If this is true, and I believe it is, then the practical consequences follow. Every person is to be valued, every interpersonal occasion is to be sought. Ramsey did not have the priorities expected of an ecclesiastical personage, but rather those characteristics of a theological activist who wanted to build bridges between persons and ideas.

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[36] Ramsey, Letter to Donald Evans, 16 November 1970.

This notion of theological activism was not limited to his own activity. The Church's authority had to be active in a similar way. He claimed that it must be faithful to the message of Christ by representing it to the world anew in every age. He claimed that it could not coerce people into belief or force them to accept its message. It could only evoke from them a response that the faith dimension which the Church represented could claim. This is expressed in a paper on the problem of the authority of the Church:

> The first need of the Church today is to mediate an authoritative vision, to lead the world beyond the "facts" which for so many are reality--all that there is. The Church must so exhibit its disclosure authority that men see in it God's activity in Christ...her authority is the compelling authority of a vision of God's love which she herself in her life must express; and until, in humility, she has struggled to relate her theology with the problems of thought and action which she has learned by listening to what secular men have had to say.[37]

The authority that Ramsey proposed for the Church was one of witness and service, one that listens and asks, one that is involved with people, not one that dominates, demands, and is aloof. The work of the Church, and by implication of its members, must join the gospel of Christ and the people of the modern world in a manner that does justice to both.

Ramsey's attempt to stake a claim for the faith dimension was not limited to his philosophy. It included all the activities of his life.

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[37] Ramsey, "The Authority of the Church Today" in *Authority and the Church*, S.P.C.K. Theological Collection 5, ed. R. R. Williams (London: S.P.C.K., 1965), pp. 79-80.

This is not surprising coming from a man who wrote,

> "By their fruits ye shall know them." That is a test which neither the wit of man nor the subtlety of the devil can make less searching, and it is the test for the plain man, theologians and philosophers alike...philosophy must culminate in life itself.[38]

It is the test by which the plain man judges the Church; it is the test by which the theologian judges the teaching and activity of the Church; it is the test by which the philosopher can discover the "cash value" of any claim. It is a test that can be applied to Ramsey's life: what were his fundamental beliefs? Look at his acts and you will see them expressed. How is a claim to be staked for the faith dimension? By *all* the actions of the believers, whether intellectual or practical, a claim can be staked.

III

Although disclaiming any intention to construct an image to focus the picture of Ramsey's life, I must note that he had one for himself. He was a bridge-builder. Moreover, he attempted to stake a claim for the faith dimension by building bridges between persons, whoever they were and wherever he encountered them. Attention to Ramsey's acknowledged basic conviction shows that the image of a pudgy little man in the midst of a whirlwind, charging into every breach, is simply not adequate. His life displayed his priorities: his activity was centered on encountering persons and building bridges between them. In lecture hall, in seminar room, in the pulpit, in a castle, he understood himself as a certain kind of bridge-builder. He could not force those bridges on people, for that is not the sort of authority that a church or a theologian had in his view. Both church and theologian must be tentative in theology, while being sure of "all that matters--*God*."[39]

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[38] Ramsey, "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," p. 39.

Whether Ramsey's image of himself as a bridge-builder is an adequate one to focus his life cannot be decided without a definitive biographical interpretation. Whatever image is used must account for his "burning conviction," for the activities that it sparked, and for the philosophical and theological language in which that conviction was expressed and developed. In one sense, all of what follows can be seen as an exploration of what Ramsey did in staking a claim for the faith dimension.

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[39] Ramsey, *On Being Sure in Religion* (London: The Athlone Press, 1963), 21.

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CHAPTER TWO

RAMSEY'S NOTION OF THE SELF

Since the publication of Rene Descartes' *Meditations on First Philosophy* in 1641, the concept of the self has become a central concern in philosophy and theology. In the tradition of British empirical philosophy, Hume's *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739, 1740) has remained the *locus classicus* for a "bundle-theory" of the self. Often, theologians have offered alternative understandings so as to sidestep Hume's objections to a theory of a substantial self. For the theory of the self has remained paramount for theology. It has been almost a commonplace that "God-talk and self-talk are intimately related. Indeed,...as self-talk goes, so goes God-talk."[1]

This chapter chronicles the evolution of Ramsey's notion of the self. During his Cambridge days he proposed an alternative conception that partook of his early idealist philosophical training. However, with the publication of Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind* in 1949, Ramsey changed tactics. He found a small breach in Ryle's dyke and wedged through it a notion of the self drawn from Berkeley. He later clarified this notion of the self by using (rather than sidestepping) a Humean bundle theory. Although in some ways his work on the self was "disgustingly small,"[2] and though it was flawed by a misinterpretation of J. L. Austin in his later writings, understanding it is necessary for comprehending his central contention that "'I' will never cease to be a useful guide when we are confronted with puzzles about 'God'."[3]

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[1] N. O. Schedler, "The Ghost in the Cosmos and the Ghost in the Machine," *Philosophy of Religion: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. N. O. Schedler (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 104

I

The shape of Ramsey's early idealistic notion of the self can be found in his 1948 paper, "Man and Religion: Individual and Community."[4] In this paper Ramsey claimed that beginning with Hume's bundle theory of the self was inadequate to explain ownership. He further claimed that "Hume's starting point was too abstract...he committed the 'fallacy of illegitimate abstraction' in supposing that his 'percepts'...were the constructional constituents (the ultimately concrete data) of the universe."[5] The alternative that Ramsey proposed conceived experience as an encounter of self and not-self. This involved a view that conation was "more concrete and fundamental than cognition."[6] The role of cognition was to abstract the data from this encounter and portray it. Ramsey continued:

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[2] Ramsey, "Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'," 200.

[3] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 43.

[4] This paper is the clearest statement of the themes already present in Ramsey's 1938 Burney Prize Essay, "The Concept of the Eternal" (typescript, 1938) and his "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy" (mimeographed; n.d., probably 1946 or 1047).

[5] Ramsey, "Man and Religion," 424.

[6] *Ibid.*, 425. The claim that experience is encounter is discussed in Chapter Three, below.

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> We may then see where the individuality of Descartes and Hume is inadequate; it claims that the "self" involved in a *conational* encounter is adequately analysed in terms of the spatio-temporal data of *cognition*, whereas not only is some other factor needed to give an analysis of "ownership", but this factor can only be provided by going beyond the Cartesian concept of man as "thinker," and taking conational experience as the ultimately concrete datum for philosophy. This factor will be given, indeed, on further analysis of the "subjective" aspect of the more concrete conational encounter, and will be non-spatio-temporal. It will be a Timeless Self... We have now argued for a non-spatio-temporal self as constituting, with correlated empirical data, the analysis of personality.[7]

Ramsey went on to claim that this 'self' did not act, but (as were the data of cognition) was only an abstractive.

Some five years later, Ramsey published a paper on "Notions and Ideas in Berkeley's Philosophy."[8] In this paper Ramsey abandoned discussion of the "Timeless Self," of "conational encounters" and of "abstractives." Rather than proposing an alternative to the bundle theory of the self in terms drawn from idealist philosophy, Ramsey undertook an historical investigation of Berkeley's works to discover a basis for understanding the problems of personal identity and self consciousness. The basic contention of this article was that while Berkeley, in his early work, had accepted Locke's doctrine of ideas drawn from sensation and rejected Locke's doctrine of abstract ideas, he had also found a group of "notions" similar to, but distinct from, the rejected abstract ideas:

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[7] *Ibid.*

[8] *Proceedings of the Eleventh International Congress of Philosophy*, Brussels, August 20-26, 1953, Volume 13: *History of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy* (Amsterdam: North Hollands Publishing Co., 1953), 66-71.

> Despite the fact that Berkeley sometimes spoke of abstract notions, my suggestion would be that notions refer distinctively to something to which the word "objective" cannot be properly applied at all. They have another sort of factual reference altogether: different from both "ideas" and the various functions of ideas that might be called "abstract." They have a factual reference all of their own--they relate to that "self-awareness" we have mentioned above.[9]

Words like "mind," "soul," "will," "personal activity," "spirit," neither fulfilled Locke's conditions for significance nor were they nonsense. Ramsey suggested that, although Berkeley was confused by his "idea-logic" and his "faculty psychology," he accepted some terms, called "notions" (later to be rejected by Hume), that played a vital role in explaining some perplexities: "Here is the positive and permanent claim of the doctrine of notions: 1) The philosophical oddness of the phrase 'personal identity' and 2) the empirical significance of the fact of 'reflexion'."[10]

Ramsey maintained that an "adequate empirical epistemology demands not only Locke's ideas, but this curious experiential fact which might, for the time being, be called 'self-awareness'."[11] In other words, both ideas derived from sensation and notions that grow out of self (and self-other) awareness are necessary for epistemology. Both also have a factual or experiential reference and source, although those 'sources' are different. If nothing else, this sort of interpretation of Berkeley claimed that there are different sorts of facts with which we have to deal: ones that are derived from the experience or sensation, and others grounded in that awareness characterized by the notion of self-consciousness or personal activity. In a paragraph that foreshadowed what he would later develop in "Berkeley and the Possibility of an Empirical Metaphysics,"[12] Ramsey also suggested some other implications of Berkeley's doctrine of notions:

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[9] Ramsey, "Notions and Ideas," 70.

[10] *Ibid.*, 68. [11] *Ibid.*, 69.

> To see in conclusion how these reflections could broaden out to justify an empirical metaphysics, let us glance at what Berkeley says about relations and about other selves and God. At the start he is very puzzled as to whether relations are ideas or not. But it is significant that his views about relations crystallise with his doctrine of notions. In the end he argues that relations are *reasonably* abstract, and involve an act of the mind. Now certainly relations involve "an act of the mind", but they may do this in two ways, (a) in so far as (to talk crudely) the mind groups terms together. But (b) an act of the mind might be involved in so far as an active unity was presupposed, and then we have something strangely reminiscent of Bradley's doctrine of relations. But neither Bradley nor Berkeley made a distinction between those relations that are a "considering asunder" and an *ultimate* self-other relation which must be demanded as a condition for any knowledge and any language at all. So I suggest that Berkeley's self-awareness, in relation to which his notions were defended, should be called rather self-other awareness. As we have a notion of our own activity, we must have a notion of our unique relation to an active other. This is why notions are problematically "objective" and not ideas.[13]

Ramsey further suggested that the problem of other minds and the problem of God are similar in Berkeley's philosophy, if Berkeley is to be treated as self-consistent; and that "'Self-other awareness' would be the ultimate justification for the use of words about each in so far as each

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[12] *New Studies in Berkeley's Philosophy*, ed. W. E. Steinkraus (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1966), pp. 13-30.

[13] "Notions and Ideas in Berkeley's Philosophy," pp. 70-71.

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is more than the 'ideas' it incorporates."[14] An empirical metaphysics could map the relations of these "notions" to each other and to "ideas."

Ramsey criticized the exclusion of "notions" from later empiricism, beginning with Hume. While much of "Notions and Ideas" was a rather tentative exploration, one central claim clearly emerged: "Notions" are not fictions; they are based in that fundamental awareness of self-other and the reflective awareness of consciousness as not merely the receptacle of ideas or sensations, but as active agent. This article, remarkably different from "Man and Religion: Individual and Community," written five years earlier, showed the empirical basis for Ramsey's claims concerning self-awareness and self-other-(God)-awareness. Although both articles yielded similar claims, and opposed the bundle theory, the latter displays Ramsey's acceptance of, rather than opposition to, empiricism.

By 1955 Ramsey's thought had developed enough to enable him to write an article that developed these ideas more explicitly.[15] He was able to criticize the positions that Hume and Ryle took regarding personal identity, claiming that they had made a faulty basic assumption in their approach to this problem.[16]

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 71.

[15] Ramsey, "The Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'," *Philosophical Quarterly* V, 20 (July, 1955), pp. 193-204; reprinted in *Ian Ramsey: Christian Empiricism*, ed. J. H. Gill (London: Sheldon Press and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974); citations to the original. The title was a section title in Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*.

[16] David Edwards remarked that Ramsey dealt with both positions because "as a junior colleague in Oxford, Ramsey felt inhibited in criti-

David Hume's position on personal identity, as developed in his *Treatise of Human Nature*, had influenced the course of subsequent British empirical philosophy. For instance, Bertrand Russell offered a typical interpretation of Hume's position and of the implications of that position:

> Further, the "Self," as defined, can be nothing but a bundle of perceptions, not a new simple "thing." In this I think that any thorough-going empiricist must agree with Hume.
>
> It does not follow that there is no simple Self; it only follows that we cannot know whether there is or not, and that the Self, except as a bundle of perceptions cannot enter into any part of our knowledge. This conclusion is important in metaphysics, as getting rid of the last surviving use of "substance." It is important in theology, as abolishing all supposed knowledge of the "soul." It is important in the analysis of knowledge, since it shows that the category of subject and object is not fundamental. In this matter of the ego, Hume made an important advance on Berkeley.[17]

In developing their own positions on personal identity, Russell and others had ignored Hume's profession of dissatisfaction with the results of his reasonings. In the appendix to the *Treatise*, Hume claimed to be hopeful concerning this approach to philosophy, but he also noted, ".... all my hopes vanish when I come to explain the principles that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory which gives me satisfaction on this head."[18] Hume

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cizing Ryle" (*Memoir*, 34). Whatever the cause, the critique is more valuable than one that would have dealt with either philosopher alone.

[17] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945). This citation to the fifteenth paperback printing, 663.

[18] David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. L. A. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1955), 635-36.

did admit to a "feeling" of personal identity, but attributed it to each of the successive thoughts upon reflection upon past perceptions. According to Hume, the lack of any *impression* of a distinct self, substance, or soul renders these concepts useless for any contribution to our knowledge.

But, despite Bertrand Russell, the ghost of the self or the soul did not disappear from theology, metaphysics, or epistemology. In 1949 Gilbert Ryle undertook the task of clarifying the mind-body problem and exorcising this ghost in *The Concept of the Mind.*[19] This brilliant *tour-de-force* was undertaken in order to "rectify the logical geography of the knowledge which we already possess" about the mind.[20] Ryle labelled his foe "Descartes' myth," although the belief that human beings are or have minds or souls predated Descartes by millenia. In his critique of the notion that there is a "ghost in the machine," Ryle argued that whatever statements we have made about the mind in the past can be easily and usefully reduced to statements about certain kinds of perceived or perceivable behavior. This obliterates any need for a concept such as "soul" or "self" (except possibly as a 'short-hand' expression). Ryle also claimed that no one has privileged access to his own "self" or his intentions (since these are publicly observable in terms of behavior). The problem of "other minds" is also dissolved, since in the typical sense of the term "mind" there are none, and in the rectified sense of Ryle, one gets at another's mind by observing the behavior of the other (and at one's own mind by observing one's own behavior).[21]

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[19] (London: Hutchinson and Co., 1949).

[20] *Ibid.*, 7.

Ryle attributed Hume's uneasiness, related in the appendix to the *Treatise*, and the uneasiness of other theorists as well, to reasoning of the following kind:

> Should I, or should I not, put my knowing self down on my list of the sorts of things that I can have knowledge of? If I say "no", it seems to reduce my knowing self to a theoretically infertile mystery, yet if I say "yes", it seems to reduce the fishing-net to one of the fishes which it itself catches. It seems hazardous either to allow or to deny that the judge can be put into the dock.[22]

This puzzlement has to do with "I," according to Ryle, but "I" is a pronoun and all pronouns are index words that point to some event, thing or person. At times each pronoun can be replaced by some other noun or a name: each pronoun can also index in different ways. His contention concerning "I" was that it could function in logically different ways: sometimes it indicates the bearer of my name, sometimes it can be paraphrased by "my body" and indicates only that. In a reflexive sentence ("I caught myself beginning to dream") the pronouns point neither to a committee of selves nor to a soul in successive moments: it is rather that each use has the same referent, although each pronoun has a different sense.[23] The entrapping puzzle is that the "I" of any moment does not sit still enough for us to observe it. As no event can describe itself completely, but is describable only in a subsequent event, so neither is "I" describable while acting, but only when the action is completed. The description is a constituent of what Ryle called a higher order action. It is like a book review: "An ordinary reviewer may review a book, while a second order reviewer reviews reviews of the book. But the second order criticism is not a criticism of itself. It can only be criticized in a further third order review."[24] Just as a book cannot review itself, I cannot observe myself. The systematic elusiveness of "I" is not a mystery to be wondered at, but a puzzle to be solved. On this view, tomorrow one could in principle exhaustively describe what happened today, as a reviewer could reprint a book.

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[21] This is not intended to be a complete representation of the points that Ryle makes, but only a summary of those that have bearing on the problem of personal identity.

[22] Ryle, *Concept of Mind*, 187.

Ryle believed that he had mapped the "logical geography of 'I'" so as to eliminate the perplexity that Hume admitted in the Appendix to the *Treatise*. However, this solution is unsatisfactory. It ignores the fact that sometimes an effort is made to understand what one is doing while one is doing it. While one can never catch a glimpse of or get an impression of "I," *i.e.* oneself acting, one does try to understand and evaluate one's acts while one is performing them. Ryle used the metaphor of a fishing net. He implied that the exact shape of the net filling is discoverable only when the net is filled: we can't understand its shape while it is still taking shape. On his terms both acting (action occurring) and action (action having occurred) carry identical descriptions. Since we can only understand the event after it is described, whatever mystery "I" presented at any time can be solved by watching and waiting for action to cease.

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[23] Cf. *Ibid.*, 189-90.

[24] *Ibid.*, 196.

Ramsey's approach to the analysis of this problem began with his elucidation of the assumption that he claimed lay behind the accounts of both Hume and Ryle: "that any situation which becomes the 'object' of a higher order action is unchanged in the process."[25] The example that Ramsey used to illustrate the logic of descriptions for what Ryle called "higher order actions" was to consider "Person A describing Person B solving chess-problem C." When this is rewritten "A describing (B solving chess problem C)," it is clear that A's describing B's actions does not change B's actions, just as a reviewer's review does not change the book that he is reviewing.

To analyze this further Ramsey offered another example, "I describing (I solving chess problem C)." He suggested that this may not be a special case of the former for the following reasons:

> If we assume that what eludes us now, becomes in the next minute wholly tractable, then since, at this next minute, an earlier situation has been completely objectified, what account can we then give of the subject-object distinction which is the permanent presupposition of all living and talking alike? What account can we give of our "subjectivity" "now"?[26]

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[25] Ramsey, "The Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'," 196.

[26] *Ibid.*, 197.

This recapitulates the problem that Hume felt and Ryle sidestepped: using Ryle's metaphor, can we say nothing different about the netting of the fish from what we say of the filled net? But this is the point at which Ryle's metaphor breaks down: no one has any reason to think that self-awareness is a property of a fishnet, that the net is *clutching* the fish, or *intending* to do so. But "clutching" and "intending" are reasonably ascribed to people. Ramsey argued that "any attempt by 'I' to discover 'I' replaces 'I' by some fact I_n and so on without end. So the problem of 'personal identity' is now raised in this way, *viz* How are we to talk of 'one self' if all we have is an infinite series of perceptual terms?"[27] Or, how are we talk at all of subjectivity and self-awareness if we have nothing but objective and factual terms to use? How can we talk of something not 'given in sensation' which eludes our observation?

Ramsey rejected the assumption that a "highest-order action" involving an acting individual can in the next moment be publicly exhausted because the factual and objective description of the events that occurred cannot talk adequately of the awareness of personal identity and the acting of the subject. While some actions may be tractable in this way, he found that

> [the problems of] personal identity, self-elusiveness and the systematic elusiveness of "I" are all related to the inadequacy of "objective" terms and relations, worked by the ordinary subject-and-predicate model to account for a highest order situation...as it occurs.[28]

Although we may have a Humean feeling or intuition of personal identity, the problem is that we never catch a glimpse of a pure and simple ego--the full meaning of "I" is not exhausted--in events or perceptions, as Hume noted. There remains the residual intuition of self, of a self-aware and active intellect. We continue to use "I" in our discourse and have some notion that it refers not only to tractable facts, but also to what may be called subjectivity, an area excluded from the realm of knowledge on the analyses of Hume and Ryle.

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[27] *Ibid.*, 197. [28] *Ibid.*, 201.

Ramsey's objections to Ryle's solution of the problem posed by Hume's approach to the self and personal identity were twofold: First, Ryle was unable to make any linguistic sense of the subject-object distinction; second, Ryle, like Hume, could not understand the continuity that we ordinarily assume is part of human life. Ramsey's basic contribution to rectifying the logical geography of "I" was to point out two other concepts that have similar logical placings, both of which, like "I," involve a presumption of subjectivity that cannot be exhausted by descriptive or factual terms.

The first suggestion is that "I and feeling are close logical kinsmen."[29] "Feeling" was a troublesome word for both Hume and Ryle. Hume, in the appendix to the *Treatise*, had confessed to a "feeling" that there was a connection between the successive thoughts or perceptions. Ryle had noted that feel can work "very much like a perception word." But Ramsey noted that in *The Concept of Mind* there are other situations in which the word feeling "is used with a curious reference to the *subject*, and in this way there is *no parallel* in the use of perception words."[30]

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[29] *Ibid.*, 202.

Ramsey concluded:

> The point we would make is this, viz., that it is this *very peculiarity* about the logic of "feeling" that makes the word fit so well what is being urged as something which is both subjective and objective. It is precisely the puzzle Ryle discovers in the logic of feeling that might be said by Whitehead to justify the sort of use that he at any rate--and certainly I--would make of it.[31]

The point is that there are some 'feelings' that presuppose both a feeler and a felt. To ignore either the subjective or the objective constituent of these feelings renders the understanding of them faulty.[32]

The second suggestion Ramsey offered was that the logical placement of "actions" can help to indicate the logical placement of "I." He asked whether we ought not be "specially cautious of working highest order *actions* as though they could be adequately understood in terms of just another set of spatio-temporal events which presently 'come of age'."[33] The parallel that Ramsey drew was just as an action cannot be understood as mere events (just as action-logic is not event-logic), neither can an adequate understanding of "I" be in terms of a description of events. In both cases, something eludes description when one uses "I" in sentences such as "I ate lunch" or "I slammed the window closed."

> Hume's error was to suppose that [self-awareness's] empirical anchorage could be no other than those "past perceptions" alone. From the point of view of language, the systematic elusiveness

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[30] *Ibid.* [31] *Ibid.*

[32] This also involves Ramsey's claim that experience is subject-object in structure, symbolized "I r O," a claim to be discussed in Chapter Three.

[33] *Ibid.*

> of "I" makes the claim that "I" systematically eludes all observation language; it is a claim that "I" has a logical status all its own and is not a "perception" word.[34]

The claim that "I" is not a perception word might trouble neither Hume nor Ryle. But the further claims that the status of "I" was nonetheless significant and that that status was unique (a claim that was overstated, considering that Ramsey found some "logical kinsmen" for "I") still need to be substantiated.

The critical difference between Ramsey and the narrow empiricists is obvious only in light of Ramsey's work on Berkeley. With Berkeley he argued that "I" belongs to the category "notions" and that "notions" are not "ideas," yet are legitimate currency in the realm of knowledge. The cash value of "I" is as a word that serves to integrate sentences about describable facts and as a word that has its empirical grounding not only in the facts, but also in the "feeling" that Hume attributed to each successive thought. In sum, "I" is that notion which refers to a principle of activity that is the subject of action, thinking, feeling and saying.

If this version of the systematic elusiveness of "I" is accepted, how can it be talked of? Ramsey suggested that although a straight-forward factual account of the matter could not be given, that does not exclude an attempt to "evoke or induce by some tale or other the sort of

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[34] *Ibid.*, 204. In a later article Ramsey maintained that the claim that "I" had a status all its own is one that might not be troublesome to Ryle. Cf. Ramsey, "Empiricism and Religion," *The Christian Scholar* XXXIX, 2 (June, 1956), 159-63.

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situation for which part-elusiveness is claimed."[35] While one can describe the event "my closing the window," the motives for it, the physical laws involved, *ad infinitum*, my intending and my acting will elude a *description* of the event. On Ramsey's terms, an attempt to talk of "I active now" cannot be a description. Ramsey offered a number of stories to evoke or induce this understanding of what "I" is. The barest and simplest follows:

> Ask someone to recall, in rapid succession, varying situations of veridical and illusory sense perception. The more, and the more varied these were, the better. The hope would be that such an exercise would use the commonly recognised differences between each situation to emphasize all the better that part of our self-awareness which is an *invariant* in all the situations.[36]

But there is a problem here: how can we know that the self-awareness that this exercise putatively evokes is *invariant*? How can we know that this invariance is in some way central to each situation? This does not overcome Hume's contention that "the thought alone feels personal identity when reflecting on the train of past perceptions that compose a mind, the ideas of them are felt to be connected together, and naturally introduce each other."[37] Ramsey claimed that Hume erred by supposing "that self-awareness's empirical anchorage could be no other than those

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[35] *Ibid.*, 198. Although he did not use the term here, he later called the result of this evoking or inducing a "disclosure" in, *e.g.*, "Contemporary Philosophy and the Christian Faith," *Religious Studies* I, 1 (October, 1965), 47-61.

[36] *Ibid.*, 199-200.

[37] Hume, *Treatise* (Appendix), 635.

'past perceptions' alone."[38] But he did not say just what the other empirical anchorage might be, other than to allude to Berkeley's doctrine of notions:

> Again, Berkeley's doctrine of notions, connected as it is with the awareness I have of my own activity, and distinguished as it is from his theory of ideas, becomes a plea not to work the self-awareness which accompanies highest order actions in terms of the subject-predicate logic appropriate to "ideas." The logic of notions is Berkeley's way of emphasizing the empirical peculiarities of self-awareness, and in the doctrine of notions is Berkeley's venture after an empirical metaphysics.[39]

In this article, Ramsey has shown that whatever "I" might refer to, it is not factually describable, publicly exhaustible, or completely observable. To consider it so makes action-logic into event-logic and debilitates, if not destroys, any distinction between subject and object.

II

Ramsey continued to build on the arguments of "The Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'." In *Religious Language* he claimed that "I," partly tractable, partly intractable; partly corrigible, partly incorrigible, serves as a guide for "God." He further claimed that the expression, "I'm I," serves as a "stopcard" (a final answer) to questionings about motivations and reasons for actions. The final answer of the inveterate fisherman to long questioning concerning why he fished, according to Ramsey, is, "Because I'm I." There is no other ultimate justification for an action other than "that is the person I am," although there may be ways to improve or correct one's behavior.[40] In *Freedom and Immortality* he made the point that, because of its odd logic (among other things), "I" cannot be the subject of some sentences:

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[38] Ramsey, "Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'," 204.

[39] *Ibid.*, 203.

> Finally, we say that "I am asleep" and "I am dead" are logical conundrums which arise from the fact that "asleep" and "dead" are amongst the very few words we use which are necessarily public in their unpacking, so that "I am asleep" and "I am dead" are logical hybrids, mixing words which differ enormously in their logical behaviour. The very existence of the puzzle indeed witnesses to the fact that "I", *unlike* "asleep" or "dead", cannot be restricted to what is spatio-temporal. There is, therefore, no sense in talking of "I" as coming to an end. All such temporal characterisations as "ending" must relate to my public behaviour, to "me".[41]

The next major step in the evolution of Ramsey's thoughts on "I" appeared in "Biology and Personality: Some Philosophical Reflections," where he explicitly supplemented his use of Berkeleyan notions with some concepts taken from the work of John L. Austin.[42] After reiterating the the arguments concerning the elusiveness of "I" and commenting on Hume and Ryle, Ramsey turned to A. J. Ayer's *The Problem of Knowledge*. Ramsey attacked the view that there is nothing else to be done to elucidate the concept "I" than to list its properties:

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[40] Cf. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 42-47.

[41] Ramsey, *Freedom and Immortality*, 91.

[42] Ramsey, "Biology and Personality: Some Philosophical Reflections," in *Biology and Personality*, ed. I. T. Ramsey (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 174-206; reprinted in *Christian Empiricism*. Citations to the latter. It should be noted that Ramsey guided Donald D. Evans' dissertation (later revised and published as *The Logic of Self-Involvement* [London: SCM Press, 1963]), wherein Evans used and revised the work of Austin and evolved a theory of "onlooks" (*e.g.*, "I look on the world as God's creation") as a type of utterance which could be of use in analyzing religious language. Ramsey also mentioned Austin's work in "Contemporary Empiricism: Its Development and Theological Implications," *The Christian Scholar* XLIII (Fall, 1960), 174-80. Thus, Ramsey was familiar with Austin's work for some years before he made explicit use of it in print.

> Now, what I want to suggest is that another possibility does remain. We certainly do *not* describe "I"; but no more do we "produce the objects that one is referring to," otherwise it is an "object" indeed, and our apparent success is utter defeat. The answer is that we do no production at all, but let the *subject disclose itself*.[43]

If we were to try to describe the subject, we would wind up describing some fact or event, what Ramsey had labelled I_n, rather than the subject itself. The "I" cannot be produced in order to be observed because it systematically eludes observation. An awareness of the subject cannot be produced in terms of events or perceptions; that awareness can only be evoked or induced and what that awareness is *of* is the subject that discloses itself. Ramsey suggested that the subject is like a unity of center (following a suggestion of C. D. Broad), rather than the simple unity of a succession of events or perceptions. These events or perceptions are not significant in themselves, but their arrangement serves to disclose the subject: "For I am talking about a series of events of which descriptions could be given but which when surveyed together, similarly disclose in a sort of 'unity', ourselves and our self-identity."[44] This procedure involved reliance on memory, but one's memories are in principle, and usually in fact, able to be checked for consistency, coherence and adequacy.

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[43] Ramsey, "Biology and Personality," 41.

[44] *Ibid.*, 42.

The arguments in "Biology and Personality" represent a significant clarification of Ramsey's thought. Ramsey's position was informed by his understanding of Berkeley's "notions." But it only becomes clear in this article what a notion is and what content it has. A "notional awareness," an awareness of self, is the other empirical anchorage (in addition to the individual perceptions) for talk of a "self." This is not the memory of self-awareness (which, as Hume noted, could be the product of each of a succession of events), but rather the discernment of a *pattern* disclosed in the actions of one's life. The example Ramsey used was the center of a circle, although the examples of a mathematical series, Gestalt diagrams, or Wittgensteinian duck-rabbits could also have been used. The suggestion Ramsey made was this: there *is* a pattern of acting, although a description of that pattern is subject to correction. The fact of the continuity and shape of a life is as given as the pattern or shape of a figure. While the pattern may be difficult to discover and impossible to describe adequately, it is in principle discoverable (disclosable) and representable. The empirical anchorage of notional awareness, of awareness of "I," is the pattern. The shape of that pattern and the content of the notion is subject to the same standards of assessment as any other representation. In sum, the notion is incorrigible; the way it is represented is subject to correction.

In the context of a symposium, *Personality and Science*, Bishop Ramsey claimed the following as the content of the notion of the self:

> All this suggests that the one unifying concept, definitive of personality, is not soul nor mind nor body. There is no

> kind of underlying cushion to which all our bodily and mental events and characteristics are attached as pins; and any basic personality matrix is not static. Rather is personality to be analysed in terms of a distinctive activity, distinctive in being owned, localized, personalized. The unity of personality on this view is to be found in an integrating activity, an activity expressed, embodied and scientifically understood in terms of its genetic, bio-chemical and endocrine, electronic, neurological and psychological manifestations. What we call human behaviour is an expression of that effective, integrating activity which is peculiarly and distinctively ourselves.[45]

The content of the notion of "I" is that activity expressed in, but not exhaustively described in terms of, the events of one's life.

What Ramsey has done is to move from discussion of a timeless self, to a self in time. That self cannot, on his terms, be described, any more than acting can be described. It is, however, possible to note a pattern of actions, through which an awareness of the character of the actor can be disclosed. Ramsey has, in effect, turned a bundle-theory of the self on its head. Each event or action *may* be understood alone, but that does not explain the feeling that Hume confessed in the appendix to the *Treatise*. Ramsey has accounted for that feeling not on the basis of a privileged access theory, nor on the basis of intuition alone, but on the basis of a checkable intuition or feeling. That is, the feeling of continuity is based in the awareness of the character of one's life; the content of that notional awareness is based in and disclosed through the set of actions and events that form one's life. It can be modified or corrected by improving the understanding of the events and the 'shape' of the bundle in any of the various ways in which a person's behavior is understood or explained. But the shape of the bundle, the character of the individual, remains open to view. What that shape is may be misunderstood; but that there is a shape (or that everyone has some character, even a 'spineless' one, perhaps) is an unavoidable fact.

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[45] Ramsey, "Human Personality," 127-28.

A person's character, Ramsey claimed, is "a person's ability to organize or control his life in some ordered way... Such a view of a person as self-directing surely points to human personality as some kind of unity."[46] We can become aware of what sort of unity there is, not by observation, but by self-disclosure. "We become aware of our transcendent subjectivity as and when each of us comes to himself, comes alive, affirms himself...when a story about observables takes on depth, reveals another dimension."[47] The only way to speak of what systematically eludes observation is in terms of metaphors or models. The pattern of the observable actions and events of my life can serve as the model through which I can become aware of who I am, *i.e.*, what unified activity is presupposed by the events of my life and complements descriptions of its events and my actions.

Although Ramsey's notion of the self is at odds with that of some empiricists, similar notions have been proposed by other philosophers. Bernard J. F. Lonergan, for instance, attempted in *Insight* to evoke an understanding of understanding by examinations of acts of understanding and misunderstanding in a way similar to Ramsey's attempts to evoke an awareness of "I" in "The Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'."[48] In one place,

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[46] *Ibid.*, 126. [47] *Ibid.*, 129.

[48] Cf. Ramsey, "Systematic Elusiveness," 198-200.

Lonergan discussed the meaning of "I" as Ramsey did: "'I' has a rudimentary meaning from consciousness and it envisages neither the multiplicity nor the diversity of contents and conscious acts but rather the unity that goes along with them."[49] A student of Gilbert Ryle's, D. C. Dennett, has argued that the task that remained to be done some twenty years after Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* was to find "an explanation of the mind which is *unified with, consistent with,* indeed *a part of* science as a whole, but eschews--at least initially--the obligation to find among the *things* of science any referents for the terms of the mental vocabulary."[50] Dennett went on to claim that "person" was an "intentional system," an imprecise concept that has a

> relatively vulnerable and impermanent place in our conceptual scheme, and could in principle be rendered "obsolete" if some day we ceased to *treat* anything (any mobile body or system or device) as an Intentional system--by reasoning with it, communicating with it, etc. That day is not to be expected--and certainly not hoped for--in spite of the inroads that are now being made in impersonal ways of controlling people.[51]

Although distinguishing two levels in talk of a person, the sub-personal and the personal, Dennett avoided any "ontological commitment" for his centralist thesis. Ramsey, more clearly than Lonergan, has shown the importance of a notion of the self for an adequate epistemology and also has shown how the two levels of discourse proposed by Dennett could be related to one another without the danger of losing the concept of person. Rather than leaving "person" relatively vulnerable, Ramsey has shown that a view of a person as embodying a distinctive activity not reducible to, but compatible with, the findings of science, is presupposed by any scientific claims. His ontological commitment is minimal, but necessary for the preservation of the concept of "person" in a conceptual scheme. Ramsey's notion of a person as a unified actor whose acts form a pattern, the understanding of which is contributed to by historical and scientific investigations, offers a clearer basis for discussion than Lonergan's and a more stable one than Dennett's.

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[49] B. J. F. Lonergan, S.J., *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding*, revised student's edition (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), 238.

[50] D. C. Dennett, *Content and Consciousness* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), 18.

[51] *Ibid.*, 190.

III

Further development of Ramsey's basic conceptions of what "person" and "I" mean occurred in his adaption of some of John L. Austin's work. In an article, "Polanyi and J. L. Austin," he investigated some of the implications that he drew from Austin:

> I shall suggest, however, that Austin was so nervous of metaphysical blunders that he failed to see the wider implications of his views, and more positively I shall argue that my own concept of disclosure can be used to interpret the insights of both Austin and Polanyi in a way that avoids the crude metaphysics which Austin rejected, while clarifying and developing Polanyi's position at certain critical points.[52]

Ramsey contended that when a speaker performed a speech-act, he did something that is a response and in responding the speaker can be said to "'come alive' in a self-disclosure, to initiate a speech act, a promise and so on."[53] Performative utterances displayed a "personal 'inwardness,' 'spiritual' at least in the sense of not being reducible to impersonal criteria or objects, the distinct perceptions of Hume."[54] While Ramsey may have been correct in inferring that a speech-act analysis has implications of a metaphysical sort concerning the speaker, the spoken of, or the hearer (in certain types of sentences), his analysis is weakened by two major flaws.

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[52] Ramsey, "Polanyi and J. L. Austin," *Intellect and Hope: Essays in the Thought of Michael Polanyi*, ed. T. A. Langford and W. H.Poteat (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1968), 170.

First, Ramsey's analysis in the earlier portion of the article was in terms of a position that Austin had rejected. Ramsey wrote in a manner that equated "performatives" with "speech-acts." While this is (roughly) the position that Austin espoused in *How To Do Things With Words*,[55] Ramsey's interpretation was faulty. Austin had originally begun with a "performative/constative" distinction.[56] This evolved into his wider theory, in which he reworked this distinction in terms of five general classes based on the "illocutionary force" (*i.e.*, the act one performs *in* saying something) of utterances when it became clear that the two-fold distinction was untenable.[57] Unfortunately Ramsey kept the performative/constative distinction intact by distinguishing some performatives in terms of their significance as of "far more crucial importance" than others because the speaker was more 'personally involved' with them.[58] Ramsey's concern with certain kinds of performative utterances was unhappy. "Performative" was not one type of illocutionary force, as Ramsey thought, but rather the name Austin abandoned for the illocutionary force of all utterances.

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[53] *Ibid.*, 194. [54] *Ibid.*, 195.

[55] Edited by J. O. Urmson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1962).

[56] Cf. Austin, "Other Minds," *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume XX (1946); reprinted in Austin, *Philosophical Papers*, ed. J. O. Urmson and G. J. Warnock (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 44-84.

[57] Cf. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 148-50. The classification (verdictives, exercitives, commissives, behabatives, and expositives) was tentative.

Secondly, Ramsey seemed bewitched by the belief that some speech-acts *do* something; but *all* speech-acts do something. What they do and the ways in which they reveal the speaker depend upon what sort of speech-act they are. While Ramsey did realize that we never "merely say" anything (if we are heard, that is), his analysis of what we do in saying something was unable to support a distinction between "merely saying" and "explicit performing."[59]

Some of Ramsey's remarks in that article survived these problems, especially those concerning the implications of the possibility of any speech-act occurring. Austin, *a la* Ryle, excluded from his analysis any "backstage artiste," suggesting that whoever claimed that there occurs an "inward and spiritual act" that 'corresponds' to the saying of some words "paves the way for immorality" by providing a way out for bigamists and welchers.[60] Yet Austin admitted that some speech-acts go wrong if they are not accompanied by the appropriate feelings, thoughts, or intentions, but offered little further explanation of these infelicities.[61] Similarly, Austin's follower John R. Searle used the "hypothesis of language as rule-governed intentional behavior,"[62] and proceeded to analyze the necessary and sufficient conditions for the happy utterance of various sorts of speech-acts, discovering that a key rule governing the issuance of most (if not all) speech-acts had to do with the sincerity of the speaker.[63] But both Austin and Searle investigated the occurrences and spelled out the necessary and sufficient conditions for successful issuance of a speech-act without investigating the issuer of the act. This presupposed that we can say nothing more about the acting than we can about the action, a presupposition Ramsey showed to be flawed. This also assumed that an investigation of an action is complete without an investigation of an actor, that the necessary and sufficient conditions for issuing a speech-act had nothing to do with a philosophical anthropology. While this assumption may be correct, Ramsey apparently thought that it was not, for he made some attempt to discover 'what it means to be human.'

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[58] Cf. Ramsey, "Polanyi and J. L. Austin," 190.

[59] Ramsey referred to W. F. Zuurdeeg's distinction between "is-language" and "use-language" as a model for this distinction. Cf. Zuurdeeg, *An Analytical Philosophy of Religion* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1959), Chapter One, especially 44-68.

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[60] Austin, *How To Do Things With Words*, 10.

[61] Cf. *Ibid.*, 11, 15, and *passim*.

[62] J. R. Searle, *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 16.

[63] *Ibid.*, 63, 66-67.

In terms of the present discussion, the question is, what kind of being can utter a successful speech-act? How is it that some beings can do so and be known to do so? Ramsey's answer contained only a formal outline and a few material hints:[64] the formal outline was given in reference to Berkeley's doctrine of notions noted above and in his reiterated basis for broader empiricism:

> ...because Austin was so critical of metaphysics of the old brand he did not see that what was significant about performatives was their first-person logic, pointing to their grounding in self-disclosure, which then allows for and involves, I would say, some metaphysical claims in so far as the personal subjectivity given in self-disclosure and affirmed in performative utterances cannot be reduced to "objects," to impersonal criteria.[65]

The material hints appeared in his reference to Austin's "Other Minds":

> Notice that, in Austin's phrases, when I perform this ritual of promising, I "stake my reputation," "bind myself to others," "give others my authority" or "my word"--where obviously to "give others my word" is *not* here just to make noises at them, or even merely to communicate. Promising involves, as Austin says, a "new plunge"...[66]

Ramsey did not explore fully the implications of this position in order to draw out the consequences of it or to explicate the grounds--the material or personal grounds--for this position. The inadequate articulation of the conceptual scheme in which to set these notions and out of which this position grows may represent a lack in Ramsey's work if it is the case that an analysis of human actions requires a philosophical anthropology. Whether or not such is needed seems to me to be a debatable point, with good but not conclusive arguments on both sides.

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[64] Donald Evans has noted this problem; in the conclusion to "Ian Ramsey on Talk about God" (*Religious Studies*, VII, 1971) he states that "Ramsey's philosophical theology needs a more profound philosophical anthropology," (p. 226).

[65] "Polanyi and J. L. Austin," 196-97.

[66] *Ibid.*, 189.

But although Ramsey was deeply involved with and concerned with persons as individuals and as a class throughout his career, this was not a 'philosophical' worry for him. He was moved to show that persons were not things and to suggest a philosophical framework that would most adequately commend this position. His concerns were not with the distinctions that could be drawn in the various acceptable versions of the doctrines of the individual as proposed by various thinkers: he was simply concerned to show that it is legitimate in the empirical philosophical tradition to consider that a person is more than a sequence of events coming of age and that an empirical notion of the self involves the claim that those events are actions with a pattern and a center of activity. This claim is justified primarily by the formal arguments produced in the early articles "The Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'" and "Notions and Ideas in Berkeley's Philosophy" and the subsequent arguments as capitulated in "Personality and Science." Although the investigations undertaken in the article "Polanyi and J. L. Austin" are provocative, they are not cogent; Ramsey simply undertook to do too much in this article to make significant progress.[67]

The arguments discussed in this chapter show that Ramsey's position did not involve an argument for a substantial soul. Although his early idealist arguments yielded similar conclusions, his final position considers a person as an agent that integrates his actions and experiences. This represents a clearer and less-convoluted position than his early conception. The concept "person" includes reference both to acting and to the pattern that unifies the events and actions of an individual's life without reference to "timeless selves" or "conational encounters." Just as "I" can not be reduced to plain facts or simple events, neither can "person." But just as that to which "I" refers eludes complete description,[68] so does that to which "person" refers.

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[67] The discussion he produced four years later for the Aristotelian Society, "Facts and Disclosures," showed a more adequate grasp of Austin's work.

Individuals do not only act, they also have experiences. As a good empiricist Ramsey could accept the claim that characterized empiricists, "All knowledge begins with experience." In his early work he explored the understanding of "experience," an exploration to be discussed in Chapter Three, as a prelude to discussing his conception of the relation of language to experience and of the relation of religious language to a certain kind of experience.

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[68] Alternatively, Ramsey's abandonment of idealist conceptions of the self early in his career could be understood as an abandonment of an attempt to describe the indescribable. Whether or not that is the case, his early idealism was abandoned.

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CHAPTER THREE

EXPERIENCE AS ENCOUNTER

"Experience" is a philosophically vague notion. It is difficult, to say the least, to define; that is, to say which occurrences are experiences and which are something else. It is also difficult to say which ideas are or are not experientially based. Hypothetical-contrafactuals cannot in one sense be experienced (they cannot be met on the street), but one can hear of them (perhaps, as a philosophical illustration) and thus they enter into one's perceptual experience. Philosophers sometimes speak of "sense-experience," of "moral experience," of "illusory experience," and so on without being able to say how these "experiences" are similar, or just how they are to be distinguished. One also attributes experience to someone as a recommendation, say, for a job ("She has had a great deal of management experience.") Although an analysis of this ordinary usage might not be difficult ("She has successfully performed managerial tasks for this company for a number of years"), how this sort of experience is related to the other sorts is not clear. Because the term is vague, philosophers who intend to be precise tend to avoid it by using more precise terms in its place.

In his published works, Ramsey rarely wrote of "experience." However, in his early unpublished works, he discussed the notion of experience at length. Therefore, an exposition of Ramsey's theory of experience is a useful preliminary to a discussion of his philosophy of religion. I intend to trace the background of Ramsey's fundamental claim, "experience is encounter," to assess its adequacy, and to show how Ramsey at one time distinguished religious experience from other sorts of experience. In Chapter Four, the relations between language and experience, and specifically between religious language and religious experience, can be explored.

I

The most succinct treatment of Ramsey's claim "experience is encounter" is contained in his unpublished "Outline of a Christian Philosophy" from his Cambridge days. In a section on "Experience, Language and Philosophy," he wrote:

> While experience involves a subject-object duality, it must clearly also be *a unity* to allow for the very possibility of awareness at all. Otherwise, there is a gulf between Knower and Known, which no amount of ingenuity will bridge. This problem of "connectedness" as Whitehead calls it, will only be solved if we begin with a connectedness in experience itself. This is a theme which F. H. Bradley and A. N. Whitehead have developed at length, and even James Ward (differing in all other respects so much from Bradley) would emphasize it as well.
>
> If we search for a fundamental description of experience which will emphasise this characteristic of duality-in-unity, I do not think we shall find one better than the word "encounter"... "Encounter"...suggests a dual activity, while at the same time not altogether concealing the unity essential to the situation. There is some truth in Schleiermacher's metaphor of experience as a "Kiss", an "Embrace", a duality-in-unity.
>
> Pursuing our examination of experience still further, let us notice that all experience is an activity: sense-experience is

> perceptual activity; moral experience is moral activity, and so on.[1]

The two key points of this discussion are that Ramsey considered the problem of "connectedness" crucial (that is, to say how one's experience is related to whatever there is) and that he understood an occasion of experience as formed of two poles (subjective and objective) that were both active. He had put this latter point differently in his earlier Burney Prize Essay of 1938, "The Concept of the Eternal": "So long as our attention be confined to perceptual situations, there may be a methodological excuse in considering this Self primarily as a passive onlooker who can, however, when occasionally convenient, squint, move and get drunk."[2] The claim that experience is encounter involves the claim that, whatever experience is, it is not merely the passive reception of sense-data.

In a later discussion of Russell's theory of knowledge by acquaintance in his unpublished typescript for "Fact, Metaphysics and God," Ramsey claimed that construing sense data as the invariant basis of knowledge, as Russell did, was inadequate because "no 'objective datum' is ever uninterpreted."[3] He suggested that Russell attempted to understand a subject in terms of objects. Rather than taking objects or sense-data (as Russell did) as basic, Ramsey's account of experience as encounter

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[1] Ramsey, "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," 3-4.

[2] Ramsey, "The Concept of the Eternal," typescript, 57.

[3] Ramsey, "Fact, Metaphysics and God," typescript, n.d., p. 1/12/14. He made a similar claim in "Facts and Disclosures," 160-63.

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takes the *relation* of "I" (the self) to "O" (the object) as basic. He thought that this was a choice "between two presuppositions--taking 'O' as fundamental or 'I r O' as fundamental and my claim would be that fewer difficulties are involved by the second presupposition."[4]

To illustrate this presuppositional difference, a comparison of the ways in which Ramsey and Russell understood Descartes' *cogito* is informative. Both of them wanted to overcome the dualism inherent in Descartes' thought, but the ways in which they do this are different. Russell put the problem this way: "'I think' is his [Descartes'] ultimate premiss. Here the word 'I' is illegitimate; he ought to state his ultimate premiss in the form 'there are thoughts'. The word 'I' is grammatically convenient, but does not describe a datum."[5] Ramsey, as shown in the previous chapter, granted that "'I' does not describe a datum," but claimed it was nonetheless a legitimate notion. He claimed further that all thinking entailed a relation. In this way the Cartesian dualism is overcome by understanding "I r O" as the basic form of thinking and of all experience. The three aspects, I, a relation, and an object, are necessary for thinking or experience to occur. Although these elements are distinguishable through analysis, they are not separable in fact. Ramsey did not always make it clear in his published works that the relation between knower and known (or experiencer and experienced) is an active relation, nor how the "subject-object structure of experience," to which he frequently refers, is to be grounded or understood. Ramsey considered the denial of enduring subjectivity on the part of Hume, possibly by Ryle, and *mutatis mutandis* by Russell, at least as a difference between himself and the "narrow empiricists" in their respective presuppositions. At most, he implied that this difference showed a fundamental mistake on their part.

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[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Bertrand Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy,* 567.

The "r" in Ramsey's symbolization of experience "I r O" is a relation in which the object affects the "I"[6] and in which the "I" actively attends to or strives for the object.[7] Ramsey believed that the "O" affected the "I" but that the "I" did not affect the "O" in itself, but only by structuring the ways in which the "O" can affect the "I." This notion of experience as doubly active, as a duality-in-unity, remained a presupposition underlying his published works.

The source of this notion of experience was the work of sometime Cambridge philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. Peter Baelz recalled that Ramsey was "saturated in Whitehead" at Cambridge in the late 1940's. The mimeographed "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," which dates from this period, exhibits this influence, but also shows borrowings from Bradley, Berkeley and Russell, and mentions Spinoza, Schleiermacher and McTaggart.[8] Although Berkeley and Bradley played leading roles in forming

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[6] Cf. Ramsey, "Polanyi and J. L. Austin," 196.

[7] Cf. Ramsey, "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," p. 4, where he claimed that a fundamental feature of experience was its "conatus" or "vis" (according to Spinoza), and which he called the conative feature of experience.

[8] P. R. Baelz interview 23 October 1974 in Oxford. Although much is made of the Universe as sacramental in the "Outline," no mention is made of either C. E. Raven or John Ray (a seventeenth century Cambridge Platonist) both of whom were influential on Ramsey, according to Baelz.

Ramsey's thought, to the point that the "Outline" is at least epistemologically "a form of Idealism,"[9] his debt to Whitehead was evident. This can be seen by comparing the "Outline" with the subsequent "Fact, Metaphysics and God," where Ramsey said that Whitehead made an important step forward beyond Bradley:

> The significance of Whitehead is that while, like Bradley, he appeals to a "unity of feeling" logically and psychologically prior to terms and relations, and claims such a fact as "most concrete", [for] a basis for metaphysics he differs quite importantly from Bradley in his view of its structure.[10]

The difference that Whitehead made is that he proposed a different sort of subject-object distinction from Bradley who talked as if the substance-quality distinction inherited from Greek and medieval philosophy were adequate to discuss all propositions. Whitehead suggested that a different sort of subject-object structure was necessary to discuss the most concrete levels of experience. Ramsey summarized this:

> In other words, not only must substance-quality logic forfeit all claims to adequacy, but when we start again it must be with a subjectivism balanced by a necessary object reference. We must start indeed with an awareness possessing a subject-object structure, an awareness embracing a duality, *but* it must be a subject-object structure *not* talked about adequately in substance-quality logic.[11]

Ramsey quoted from Whitehead's *Adventures of Ideas* to underline this point and to acknowledge his dependence on Whitehead for his understanding of the subject-object structure of experience:

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[9] Ramsey, "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," 9

[10] Ramsey, "Fact, Metaphysics and God," B2/90. The grammar of this sentence is flawed in the typescript.

[11] *Ibid*. B2/92.

> "An occasion of experience is an activity, analysable into modes of functioning which jointly constitute its process of becoming. Each mode is analysable into the total experience as active subject, and into the thing or object with which the special activity is concerned... Thus the subject and object are relative [*correlative*] terms. An occasion is a *subject* in respect to its special activity '*concerning*' an object; and anything is an *object* in respect to its '*provocation*' of some special activity within a subject." So at the end, he sets alongside "feeling" another word "occasion", or sometimes the phrase "actual occasion" whose logical placing has to be odd enough to imply a subject-object structure.[12]

Ramsey's claim that the subject-object distinction is "the permanent presupposition of all living and talking alike"[13] is based in this Whiteheadian approach to experience. This subject-object distinction is not to be understood in terms of "I and the reality out there," but rather in terms of the phases or occasions of human experience in which there is something that provokes us and to which we respond. Each provocation and response can be understood as one event of experience, a duality-in-unity. Thus, the *r* of Ramsey's symbolization "I r O" symbolizes the provoking and affecting of "I" by "O" and the way "I" attends to "O" which affects the ways that "O" affects "I."

Ramsey did not use "I" (see previous chapter) in just the same way that Whitehead used "subject." However, Ramsey's understanding of the human subject is not inconsistent with Whiteheadian philosophy. Whitehead's notion of the "soul" as the series of "presiding occasions" of a body, one kind of what he called an "enduring object," may be a form of the bundle theory of the self that Ramsey rejected. However, Whitehead also wrote of "the genetic character inherited through a historic route of actual occasions." This character could be justifiably equated to the story of "I" in the past, to its "pattern," or using the metaphor of the last chapter, to the story of the "netted fish." But as noted there, the "netting of the fish" is something that cannot be described but only evoked. Ramsey's "I" which systematically eludes all descriptions of it is understandable as that part of the subjective occasion that does not become objectified as an enduring object.[14] It would be that part of the story of a person that cannot be told, that part of a person of which awareness can only be evoked. Whether or not this is the way Ramsey understood Whitehead, the latter's influence on Ramsey's theory of experience is clear.

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[12] *Ibid.*, B2/96. Ramsey quoted Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: Macmillan, 1967; first edition, 1933), 176. "[*correlative*]" is inserted by Ramsey. The inseparability of disclosure from discernment-commitment is based in this notion taken from Whitehead. These terms are discussed in Chapter Four.

[13] Ramsey, "Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'," 197. Cf. Chapter Two, above.

According to Ramsey, the object of experience, the "O" of "I r O", is God and other people. The major enduring influence here is not Whitehead, but Berkeley. Berkeley's influence can be seen throughout Ramsey's works from his pre-Oxonian "Outline of a Christian Philosophy," through the articles of his time at Oxford, to 1966, when Ramsey published "Berkeley and the Possibility of an Empirical Metaphysics." The key passage from the latter is also presupposed by his 1972 Aristotelian Society paper, "Facts and Disclosures." In 1966 Ramsey claimed:

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[14] Cf. Whitehead, *Process and Reality* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960), 166.

> "Seeing God" is not to be modeled in terms of sensing a collection of ideas"; this is intelligible but inadequate. Nor do we see him by discerning somehow or other his "essence"; that is altogether *un*intelligible, says Berkeley. The "metaphysical hypothesis of our seeing all things in God by the union of the human soul with the intelligible substance of the Deity" is something "which neither I, nor anyone else could make sense of." (ALC, 159) Rather do we see God "as plain as we see any human person whatsoever" and he "daily speaks to our senses in a manifest and clear dialect." (ALC, 159)... We see God as we see man; God and other people are what we meet. But we do not meet just "bods," nor is a personal encounter the same as the physical crush of a queue.[15]

Ramsey went on to add that Berkeley's opponents had forsaken "an actively encountered God--a *living* God--and instead had taken hold of static *ideas*."[16] Static ideas can tell no more of God or of "other minds" than of Berkeley's "thinking principle" or Ramsey's "I." Ideas, sensations or perceptions alone are not adequate. An awareness of the acting and active principle in the action requires more: a logic of "notions," terms that do not refer to ideas, yet are not nonsense.

Berkeley's claim that we see God as we see any human person was accepted by Ramsey. Just as we often merely bump into people in a queue and only rarely does an old friend disclose himself to us, so we often do not notice that *what* we encounter in encountering the world is God.

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[15] Ramsey, "Berkeley and the Possibility of an Empirical Metaphysics," in *New Studies in Berkeley's Philosophy*, ed. Warren E. Steinkraus (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1966), 23-24. ALC refers to Berkeley's *Alciphron*.

[16] *Ibid.*, 24.

The claim that "God and people are what we meet" was fundamental for Ramsey's later work on religious language, especially in considering the situation in which religious language is generated. This claim was the outcome of Ramsey's understanding of experience as encounter and the basis for his further claim that we can be sure in religion, but must be tentative in theology: we can be sure that we encounter something--someone--but what we can say of that which is encountered is always open to correction.

C. B. Daly, in "Metaphysics and the Limits of Language," shed some interesting light on this distinction between notions and ideas as used by Ramsey. He wrote:

> It would seem that to exclude discussion of the self from philosophy is to exclude discussion of God from philosophy too. Professor Ramsey has called attention to the logical relatedness of 'I' and 'God'. This is surely an aspect of the truth, so familiar to saints and mystics, that God is *intimior intimo meo*. It receives striking corroboration in modern positivism, for which both God and the self are meaningless.[17]

Ramsey reversed the negation of "modern positivism" by paying attention to Berkeley's notions and by construing experience as "I r O." Having discussed the genesis of the elements of this claim, and some of its implications, the next task is to evaluate this claim. Rather than attempting a comparison of this understanding of the fundamental structure of experience to others, the assessment will take the form of attempting to discover its "cash value" by showing the sorts of problems it solves--and leaves unsolved.

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[17] C. B.Daly, "Metaphysics and the Limits of Language" in *Prospect for Metaphysics*, 185.

II

If this were a work focusing on Ramsey's epistemology, it might now enter the thorny thicket that constitutes the problem of perception as part of evaluating Ramsey's claim that experience is encounter. I shall rather notice where one British philosopher emerged from that thicket and attempt to show where Ramsey's claim is related to a theory of sensory experience.

D. W. Hamlyn, after considering the merits of Ayer's approach to perception, Austin's criticism of sensibilia, and a number of recent articles contributing to the debate concluded, "What is true is that perception cannot take place except under the condition that we are having experiences... It also involves having and applying concepts--what we see we see as such-and-such."[18] After rejecting the conception that the individual constructs his world out of his private perceptions, he went on to argue that it is

> the crucial point that perception is basically an awareness of an object (using "object" in its most general, even formal, sense). Sense experiences make us aware of objects (and the object will initially be only an undifferentiated something or other), and they make possible further differentiations between objects and further ways of regarding and conceiving them.[19]

He further conceded that the idealists saw that "the primary awareness, if one can talk of such a thing, must be simple and undifferentiated."[20]

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[18] D. W. Hamlyn, *The Theory of Knowledge* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1970), 185.

[19] *Ibid.*, 186. [20] *Ibid.*, 187.

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But they could not explain how differentiation occurs. He concluded that when this awareness becomes sensation it is no longer undifferentiated:

> But experiences, the sensations which we have, are not undifferentiated, even if the consequent awareness of objects is, and their multiplicity makes possible the development of a differentiated awareness of things. The Idealists' difficulty arose from too light an acceptance of the account of sensation provided by their empiricist opponents, with its identification of sensation with the "given." With the abandonment of this idea and the acceptance of the general notion of awareness of an object as something not reducible to sensation, a better account of perception becomes possible.[21]

While it is not obvious that sensation and experience are to be identified, Hamlyn's conclusion makes a simple, undifferentiated awareness primary, rather than discrete sense-perceptions and differentiated objects, a position I take to be in line with Ramsey's account of experience as "I r O."

Hamlyn did not attempt to say what that primary awareness might be. He suggested that neither James's "blooming, buzzing confusion" is adequate, nor his contention that it is the "universe."[22] But while James' calling that primary awareness "the universe" may be rhetorical, it nevertheless points at something that Hamlyn ignored--that if it is undifferentiated and simple, it is not possible to differentiate between a single object and a plurality of objects without introducing some non-primary concept or awareness. The perception of differences is at least partially a function of education of children by adults, as Hamlyn remarked a few paragraphs earlier, which introduces concepts to structure the primary, undifferentiated awareness.

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[21] *Ibid.*

[22] *Ibid.*, 186, 187. Hamlyn cited James, *Principles of Psychology*, Chapter Seventeen.

In another place James offered an approach somewhat different from the one cited by Hamlyn. In the context of a reply to Bradley's critical article "Truth and Practice," he gave an overview of a defence for "Humanism." He wrote about the basic primary awareness in the following way:

> [The humanistic conception] represents experience in its pristine purity to be now so enveloped in predicates historically worked out that we can think of it as little more than an *Other*, of a *That*, which the mind, in Mr. Bradley's phrase, "encounters", and to whose stimulating presence we respond by ways of thinking which we call "true" in proportion as they facilitate our mental or physical activities and bring us outer power and inner peace. But whether the Other, the universal *That*, has itself any definite inner structure, or whether, if it have any, the structure resembles any of our predicated *whats*, this is a question which humanism leaves untouched.[23]

What James offered here was a more open-ended account of what the absolute idealists claim occurred when the mind met reality. Although discussion of the relations between language and experience will be taken up in the next chapter, we can now note that James offered an answer to the question, "What is primary awareness?" by saying "All we can say is that it is one's encountering an *Other* or *That*." This primary awareness can be symbolized, Ramsey would add, "I r O."

Ramsey explicitly recognized that the differentiation of this primary awareness is the result of learning. This is discussed most clearly in the context of differentiation between "the facts" and the "objective reference" in his 1972 paper, "Facts and Disclosures":

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[23] William James, "Humanism and Truth," reprinted from *Mind*, vol. XIII, N.S. (October, 1904) "with slight verbal revisions and some interpolations" in *Pragmatism and Four Essays from The Meaning of Truth*, ed. Ralph B. Perry (New York: World Publishing Co., 1969), 236.

> ...even when agreement is reached on the "facts" the objective reference is still something different altogether, something given immediately and intuitively in a disclosure whose characterizations may be infinitely corrigible, but where...we may sometimes reach relatively stable and agreed interpretations and contexts.[24]

Thus, the "facts of the matter" are not identified with the objective reference, the "undifferentiated something or other," but rather are the "objects" *as we perceive them*. This distinction is not clear in Hamlyn's work. In James's work, the relation of the perceived objects to the primary awareness remained an unexplored question. For Ramsey, this was a prime question. The primary awareness is "what is more than the facts and features of the world"; it is that which "the disclosures disclose."[25] The adequacy of the features perceived and the facts talked of to that which is disclosed is dealt with by Ramsey primarily in terms of "empirical fit," which I shall deal with in Chapter Seven.

The key problem that Ramsey solved by his notion that "experience is encounter" was the problem of "connectedness": how is one's experience connected to whatever else there is? Sense-data had been tried and found wanting.[26] Ramsey claimed that *beginning* with connectedness in experience, rather than either with the self or perceiver or with the sense-data or objects alone, was the only satisfactory way to solve this problem.[27]

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[24] Ramsey, "Facts and Disclosures" in *Christian Empiricism*, 175.

[25] *Ibid.*

[26] Oxford philosopher John L. Austin also argued this in a different way in his *Sense and Sensibilia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962). Ramsey's position is different from Austin's, but not contradictory to it.

Ramsey's claim that the structure of experience is a duality-in-unity also involved the claim that no experience is completely private because the objective component of every experience is publicly available. While my perception of and understanding of the objective constituent of an occasion of experience may be different from yours, we can say that we share our experience on the grounds that the objective constituent of each of our experiences is the same *Other* or *That*. Our experiences differ in so far as we differ in ability and conceptual apparatus to structure, perceive, understand and articulate our experiences. The differences in the reports that different people give of "the same experience" can be explained for those occasions when we have *not* reached "relatively stable and agreed interpretations and contexts."[28] For example, a rainbow may be understood as simply the result of the refraction of sunlight through a misty rain. It may also be understood as a disclosure of the love and mercy of God, a sign of his covenant.[29] These two understandings are different, although the objective constituent of the experiences of the physicist or meteorologist and a modern-day Noah is the same. The objective constituent of the experiences of a color-blind person and a person with 'normal' color-perception is also the same. In this case, the ability to structure the experience and to perceive what is there is different. Which 'perception' is to be preferred is subject to the criteria of empirical and rational fit.[30] Ramsey's beginning with experience as an encounter has clarified the differences (and similarities) between "my" experience and "your" experience: while they are the same in so far as they have the same objective constituent, they are different in so far as they are structured, perceived, understood or articulated differently.

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[27] Cf. Ramsey, "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," 3

[28] Ramsey, "Facts and Disclosure," 175.

[29] Cf. "Fact, Metaphysics and God," B69/182 where Ramsey developed a similar example based on Genesis 9.

Although differentiation is impossible at the level of fundamental awareness, the question nonetheless arises, "Is the objective component of experience one or many?" But the answering of this question entails discrimination and conceptualization. While experience is, on Ramsey's terms, inevitably *of* something, how is that something best conceptualized? As a world? As a chaos? As a multiverse? As creation? As an unending process? Each of these offers articulations of ultimate claims, or what Ramsey called "final options," and the choice of these is to be evaluated in terms of the metaphysical and empirical justificatory theses that are outlined in Chapter Seven. The final arbiter of that choice is what I shall call 'final' empirical fit, the happiness of a life lived under each of these visions. Ramsey's answer to that question, however, is "one" or "unity" as far as the physical universe is concerned; "many" on the level of personal encounter. Ramsey claimed that "God and other people are what we meet."[31] Behind this answer and the conception of experience as encounter there stands an analogy, that I am to my body as God is to the world. To complete the discussion of experience, I shall explore that analogy.

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[30] Compare Ramsey's account of (one) hallucination in "The Intellectual Crisis of British Christianity" in *Christian Empiricism*, 238.

In Chapter Two, I discussed Ramsey's concept of the self, which may be best summarized in the following:

> From the point of view of *language*, the systematic elusiveness of "I" makes the claim that "I" systematically eludes all observation language; it is a claim that "I" has a logical status all of its own and is not a "perception" word.[32]

The analogy is made explicit when the following quotation is juxtaposed to the previous one:

> ...the central problem of theology is how to use, how to qualify, observational language so as to be suitable currency for what in part exceeds it--the situations in which theology is founded. At any rate, "I" will never cease to be a useful guide for us when we are confronted with puzzles about "God."[33]

Beyond the linguistic basis there is the notion, explored in Chapter Two, that "I" or the self is an enduring agent, and that descriptions of the agent's actions do not necessarily tell the whole story of the agent's acting. To continue the analogy, all descriptions of the "facts and features" of the world also do not tell the whole story, for, like the descriptions of actions, they leave out the story of the acting, which can only be disclosed, not described. Hence, on the basis of this analogy there is made clear the reason behind Ramsey's assertions of "unity", of "one reference" for every cosmic disclosure, of "one world." Until one pushes beyond the descriptions to an actor, one does not have the whole story. And it is this acting that is important, and the application of the notion of "activity" that makes the analogy at least possible:

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[31] Ramsey, "Berkeley and the Possibility of an Empirical Metaphysics," 24.

[32] Ramsey, "The Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'," 204.

[33] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 42-43.

> If we are looking for some concept, some feature of the disclosure which characterizes ourselves and what confronts us equally, which we therefore talk about neither equivocally nor analogically but univocally; if we are looking for some phrase which we can use of what confronts us in the same sense as we use it for ourselves, we have it in "activity." For we only know our own activity in matching it with an activity which confronts us. The two exactly interlock; we meet activity in the same sense that we exert it.[34]

Just as Ramsey saw no good reason to presuppose more than one actor or center of activity for the self, neither did he see any good reason to presuppose more than one actor or center of activity for the universe.

This leads into two problems. First, as Donald Evans put it, "How does the transcendence of God transcend the transcendence of I?"[35] Evans claimed that in Ramsey's work God transcended I in three ways: God transcends all the centers of particular activity, discloses himself through them, and unites them; God is worthy of worship and total commitment in a way that such worship given to any other is idolatry; God is disclosed through the observables of the whole universe rather than through a particular body.[36] While these distinctions clarify the differences between "God" and "I," Evans also noted that "the analogy between God/observable universe and I/observable behaviour...does not help us to understand the relation between God and non-observables."[37] Ramsey's response to this question about the relation between God and non-observables alluded primarily to Berkeley:

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[34] Ramsey, *Models for Divine Activity* (London: SCM Press, 1973), 61.

[35] Donald D. Evans, "Ian Ramsey on Talk about God," 140

> I am very Berkelian on this matter, and would have to begin to understand this relation in terms of the observables. They would be "observables" of many different kinds. For God's activity and mine always meet each other through the mediation of observables [of] the secular world. Like Berkeley, and as against Malebranche, I find it difficult to make much sense of "direct inspiration" if this is supposed to have no empirical counterparts whatever. I confess that, justifiably or not, I have not myself been too bothered about [this question]... I much prefer to consider [it] in the formal rather than material mode.[38]

As we have pointed out, the "O" of "I r O" is conceived by Ramsey as God and other people. The scope of God's activity is wider than that of any or all persons; God's activity is infinite while a person's activity is finite. And, anticipating the discussion of models and qualifiers, there is a gap between the sum of human activity and the infinite activity of God.[39] The justification of this can only be given in terms of articulations: "We shall reasonably prefer that discourse which (*a*) formally is the most simple, coherent, comprehensive and consistent; (*b*) materially establishes the best empirical fit."[40] Ramsey preferred to discuss the relation between "God" and "I" and "other selves" in the formal mode because these are questions about the most appropriate language, the best ultimate claim, arising from the fundamental encounter. What we meet is active, but when we ask the question, "Whose activity?" we are no longer *encountering*; we are *talking* and the proper question is about the talk, not the encounter. Ramsey claimed that this question is unanswerable in the material mode for material criteria alone are not sufficient to judge the answer. Formal criteria are also required. It is not possible to clarify this point here because we have not yet discussed the role of language. What Evans has so far done is to raise a crucial question: how are non-observables related to each other? If this can only be discussed in the formal mode, is there any actual, material, ontological relations? If not, how is Ramsey's basic metaphysical claim to be justified? To put it another way, the question is "What relation to reality do (Berkeleyan) "notions" have?

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[36] Cf. Evans, *op. cit.*, 217. [37] *Ibid.*, 216

[38] Ramsey, letter to Evans, 16 November 1970, 4.

[39] This conception of God's infinite activity as a qualified model may be the only instance acceptable to Ramsey of a model in the material rather than the formal mode. Cf. Chapter Five.

There would be no problem of the relations between "I" and "God" if God were notthought to be in some way personal: then "God" would be just another name for the world. Ramsey's position would then be a "superstitious atheism" or, possibly, a pantheism. There would be no problem of encountered activity, for every entity encountered would exhibit

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[40] Ramsey, *Models for Divine Activity*, 62. Further discussion of these criteria is reserved for Chapter Seven.

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activity of some kind which affected our responses to it. Is there any justification at this level of discussion for Ramsey's conviction that there is a personal God? In his discussion of this theme, Ramsey said:

> My argument is, then, that we may speak of God as "personal", we may attribute "personality" to God, if there occur, whether deliberately generated or not, cosmic situations of a disclosure kind, whose patterns are isomorphous with disclosures of personal reciprocity.[41]

The argument raised against this position is that this may legitimate one's attitude towards the universe, but that it says nothing about the universe; Ramsey asked "Am I indeed committed to such a personalistic atheism?"[42] His answer to this question hinged on the notion of activity:

> ...what is logically most primitive about persons is their characteristic *activity* which cannot be reduced to the behaviour they display. A person is distinguished from a machine or from an official, both of whom may be "active" but in no disclosure sense, but the kind of characteristic *activity* he displays in a situation of mutual self-disclosure. When the Universe comes alive in a cosmic disclosure whose structure is modelled by a personal reciprocity, it declares itself to us as a person does; and as a characterization of the *activity* which we then know, "person" is the most natural model of any to use.[43]

Hence, if the Other which one encounters displays such activity to evoke a "coming to oneself," a personal self-disclosure, than it is reasonable --even natural, as Ramsey says--to construe that other as a person. Of course we may be mistaken on some particular occasion:

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[41] Ramsey, "A Personal God" in *Prospect for Theology: Essays in Honour of H. H. Farmer*, ed. F. G. Healey (Welwyn, Herts: James Nisbet and Co., 1966), 65. See section three, below, for a definition of "cosmic disclosure."

[42] *Ibid.*, 66. [43] *Ibid.*, 66. Emphasis added.

> ...that very possibility, that very distinction between "person" and (say) a reciprocally active machine, between "genuine person" and paste-board imitation determines that *some* cases will be genuine. In the case of God, however, I think there is a more direct certainty. For here there is a *cosmic* --infinite, all inclusive--disclosure; and I do not see on what grounds there could be the kind of mistake possible in the child's case; for I do not see on what grounds we could deny the "otherness"--the confronting activity, or even posit a variety of referents rather than a single individuation.[44]

Ramsey went on to claim that there is no more "possibility of talking of locating God than of locating the Universe,"[45] so there is no spatial reference in talking of a God "up there" or "in the depths"; whatever meaning these attributions have, it is not locative.

This argument placed the burden of justification primarily on the validity of "religious experience." Is the "activity" which he claimed is encountered in the situations of cosmic disclosure the same as the "activity" met in situations of personal disclosure? On what grounds is it assumed that this is a univocal term--that we do not meet with the "lesser activity" attributable to a machine? The criterion offered is one's response to the experience of encounter: is that criterion sufficient? Ramsey's answer is that the criterion is sufficient if there are occurences of cosmic disclosure that are of a personal kind and if these disclosures are not illusory.

The only argument he offers for the non-illusory nature of these experiences is one by analogy: just as there are responses of a personal kind to real persons, as well as to fake persons, so there are responses

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[44] *Ibid.*, 68. [45] *Ibid.*

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of a personal kind to a real personal God, as well as possibly to fake Gods, *i.e.*, our projections. But just as responses to a fake person are dependent on our responses to genuine persons, so the responses to fake gods are dependent upon the response to the real God. Thus the second option of the possible alternatives for a cosmic disclosure's articulation is precluded since the notion of a response to a fake personal God depends upon the notion of a response to a real one.

At root this is a version of the ontological argument. An actual God is greater than an imaginary one since the actual God exists. As a response to a fake person depends upon the possibility of a response to a real person, a response to a fake God depends upon the possibility of a response to a real God. This displays the deep structure of Ramsey's argument for a personal God as an outgrowth of conceiving experience as encounter, as "I r O." As persons are logically primary, rather than minds, bodies, sense-data, etc., so the world-as-a-whole is logically primary, rather than events, happenings, material objects, etc. As persons are not bundles of events but centers of activity, so the world is not a bundle of events, but an arena of activity for persons and God. Ramsey identified the logically primary with the existent in his notion of experience as encounter. The facts and features of the world are abstractions from or models of the fundamental encounters of the existents (which are the logical primaries, *i.e.*, persons and God). As far as one's response to part of what one encounters as to a person is justified, that far is one's response to the whole of what one encounters as to a person is justified, on the grounds that both encounters evoke a personal response. Of course, sometimes one responds to part of the whole as if it were the whole; sometimes one responds to the impersonal as though it were personal. But if one does respond to the whole personally, *i.e.*, if a personal response is evoked by a cosmic disclosure, that response is as justified as a response to a person. On this view what is real are encounters between existents; the facts and features of the world are models abstracted from the real encounters.

The argument is, as suggested earlier, the reversal of what C. B. Daly attributed to modern positivism: the most meaningful (because most real) are God and the self. A theory which stops short of the personal (subjectively) or the world-as-a-whole (objectively) is inadequate. Such a theory leaves out the most real, the most important and, thus, the most meaningful. It ignores the disclosure of my self in the events of my history and the disclosure of God in the events of the history of the Universe. Conceiving this God as personal is as legitimate as conceiving myself as personal and other persons as analogously personal. Without this completion each history is incomplete because it only deals with abstractions based on the encounters that each existent has with the others.

This argument can be criticized on many grounds: the impossibility of any unified history of the Universe, the unjustifiability of assuming that only persons evoke a personal response, or the conceptual confusion inherent in the argument that prohibits coherent discussion of the relations between persons and God in the material mode. However, these criticisms can be met. The impossibility of a unified history of the universe may not be a logical impossibility, but rather a project practically impossible for a limited mind. The assumption that only persons evoke a justifiable personal response can be met by construing that assumption as analytic. The final criticism, that this is a conceptual confusion, is one that characteristically arises against all forms of theism. It can be met by noting that all the ways of talking about the relations between God and persons are in the formal mode (in Ramsey's case) and that the criticism should be in that mode: a response to "What are the relations?" will involve the construction of a model to elucidate them. What the argument does at best is to show that there are reasonable (though not conclusive) grounds for belief in a personal God.

This leads to a discussion of religious experience, the ground on which this argument is based. The next section will show the problems with describing it.

III

The characterization of any kind of experience as religious is fraught with problems. As John Hick succinctly put it, "...any special event or experience which can be construed as manifesting the divine can also be construed in other ways."[46] More important than interpretive differences is the question of what experiences can in any sense be justifiably construed as religious? Only those feelings of absolute dependence that Schleiermacher identified as the common element in piety?[47] Only those feelings which have for their object the numinous?[48] Ought "religious experience" be applied only to those kinds of experience that William James catalogs or the analogues to those experiences? Is there in fact a common thread among the varieties that can be distinguished as religious or are we committed to a "piecemeal supernaturalism"[49] or to various interpretations incommensurable one with another? Ramsey thought that all occurrences of a key type of religious experience, which he called a "cosmic disclosure," shared a thread. For Ramsey, religious language is typically theistic. He claimed that all language about God, the universe or the ultimate "must have a grounding in what we have called a cosmic disclosure."[50] In terms of the present chapter, a cosmic disclosure occurs if and only if in a situation of encounter, (1) that which is encountered is seen to be nothing less than the whole universe which appears through the facts and features by which we ordinarily characterize an encounter, and (2) if that situation gives rise to an ultimate claim. According to Ramsey, these situations can be generated by the development of qualified models, a claim which I shall discuss in Chapter Five.

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[46] John Hick, *The Philosophy of Religion*, Second Edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1973), 30.

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[47] Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed. H. R. MacKintosh and J. S. Stewart (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1928), proposition 4, 12.

[48] Cf. R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, tr. J. W. Harvey, Second Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1950).

[49] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), 405.

[50] Ian Ramsey, *Christian Discourse: Some Logical Explorations* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 79.

In a succinct way Ramsey discussed the generation of religious language from this type of experience:

> A cosmic disclosure is a situation which has come alive both subjectively and objectively, where a "plain", "flat" situation restricted to the data of sense experience has taken on "depth" or, as we say, "a new dimension". As the situation takes on depth objectively so I, as subject, take on depth subjectively; I too come alive... There is no supernatural separated by a gulf from the natural, but a supernatural of fulfilment, not denial. Further, the objectivity of God is in the last resort safeguarded as being grounded in that which is *other than myself* in such a cosmic disclosure, where I am aware of an activity meeting my own. In so far as I am aware of being relatively passive, of being acted upon, to that degree I am aware of what confronts me which is other than myself, and it is this which in a fully developed conceptual scheme can be called "God". Such a conceptual scheme arises from interweaving, with an eye to comprehension, consistency, coherence and simplicity, the various strands of discourse to which various models, central to cosmic disclosures, give rise.[51]

This informal characterization of his position includes not only the metaphysical and logical components, but also defensive components and psychological illustration. He often did this, and the analysis presented here has tried to confine itself to the former and exclude the latter. But granted that such experiences occur, is there any reason to believe that this experience is the only or basic kind of religious experience? Or is the thesis that religious language is generated from situations of cosmic disclosure "an insight into the nature of all religion, or does it constitute a stipulative recommendation for the understanding of religion...?"[52]

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[51] Ian Ramsey, "Theology Today and Spirituality Today" in *Spirituality Today,* ed. Eric James (London: SCM Press, 1968), 82-83.

[52] J.W.McClendon and J.M.Smith, *Understanding Religious Convictions,* 39.

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In so far as any religion tries to present a view of the place of man in the cosmos or finds a base in an inspiration or revelation, Ramsey would say that a cosmic disclosure situation lies at the base of these articulations, and that this situation is a basic 'religious' experience. The various forms of religion are based on those articulations. Rather than a stipulative recommendation, Ramsey identified one sort of religious experience that is basic to the various forms of religion. It is not a claim that every adherent of every religion has had such a disclosure, but rather that at least the primary or founding claim of any religion is so based. Ramsey's deficiency at this point is that he had not attempted a survey of all forms of religion. He concentrated almost exclusively on Christianity, so his claim has the status of an interesting (and possibly true) hypothesis, but one not bolstered or substantiated by extensive research. The enlightenment of the Buddha under the bo tree, the revelations communicated to Mohammed the Messenger and contained in the Qur'an seem to be examples of revelations that give rise to religions; the many forms of Hinduism and other traditional folk-religions seem to make a claim about man's place in the cosmos and the rules under which both man and cosmos are ordered. Even a naturalistic religion seems to fit this category, for in denying the supernatural, a claim is made for man's place in the cosmos. But finally, whether all religion is based in cosmic disclosures seems a moot point.

Ramsey worked primarily and extensively in Christianity and in Christian language. The most apt question is not whether Ramsey's account of experience or religious experience is adequate, but whether his account of religious language as grounded in a certain sort of experience, the situation of cosmic disclosure, is adequate to explain religious language. If his theory is adequate or can be made adequate, this offers some indirect corroboration for the theory of experience out of which it grew. That is the subject for the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

EXPERIENCE AND LANGUAGE

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss Ramsey's view of the relations between experience and language. A few aspects of this topic were mentioned in the previous chapter where they were germane, but the bulk of the discussion will take place in this chapter. The procedure will be slightly different from that of the preceding chapters. In the discussion of Ramsey's conception of experience, I did not emphasize the chronology of his publications. This was because his formal conception of experience as "I r O" remained relatively constant throughout his writings. Ramsey's view of the relationship between experience and language, however, underwent a significant modification as his thought evolved from the idealism of his early work to the broadened empiricism that characterized his final position. This chapter will therefore be explicitly historical, examining a series of Ramsey's essays chronologically to show the evolution of his position.

I

Ramsey's early position is exhibited in his "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," which dates from 1946 or 1947. The following discussion of the task of philosophy summarizes his early stance:

> The task of philosophy, then, is to elaborate a verbal scheme in terms of metaphysical words (and the vast majority of words are "metaphysical" in that sense--certainly all physical-object words like "chair", "table", and so on, are). The test of such a scheme will be how well the abstractives of reflective experience can be organised by it, i.e., how comprehensively, unambiguously, and concisely. Because the scheme so corresponds to an organisation of spatio-temporal abstractives we may take it as a profound delineation of that immediate experience whence all knowlege comes and from which all spatio-temporal abstractives emerge.[1]

Each of the words delineating spatio-temporal abstractives belongs to a certain type of language, *e.g.*, the class of ordinary objects spoken of in "common-sense everyday language" can be defined by ostensive definition. Other ways of talking about one of these objects (such as a chair or a table) in terms of sense data, or electronic events, etc., are descriptions proffered in different languages to delineate the immediate experience.[2] The languages of the various scientific fields and history (as a descriptive discipline) did not supplant ordinary common-sense language, but gave a tentative alternative verbal system "which in each case claims to give us a description (to be tested by results) of the undifferentiated unity which is the immediate Encounter."[3] Ramsey recognized that one of the implications of his way of conceiving the relationship of common sense 'abstractions' to scientific and historical 'abstractions' was that "we put illusion (so called) on the same epistemological plane as veridical perception (so called)." These are differentiated in terms of the way the language about perception is organized: "Science, by correlating the cases of interference with the ordinary cases provides verbal systems by which the two are linked, and so makes the world useable."[4] For example, Ramsey did not consider seeing a straight stick partly submerged in water as bent to be an illusion, but an occasion on which the theory of refraction supplies the appropriate connection which dissolves the apparent paradox of the claim, "It looks bent, but it feels straight." His final claim was that the complete set of metaphysical words of any given metaphysical system constituted a suggested delineation of the total immediate encounter (I r O). This encounter was understood as metaphysical reality, and it corresponded to the total object which is confronted and the subject which confronts it.[5]

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[1] Ramsey, *An Outline of a Christian Philosophy*, 6. The "spatio-temporal abstractives" are the features of the world abstracted from the encounter of the self and the rest of reality.

[2] *Ibid.*, 4, 6. [3] *Ibid.*, 16

The purpose of "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy" was to offer an alternative to logical positivism. Ramsey exposed the reasons for his philosophical venture in a colorful paragraph:

> Logical positivism, however varied its prophets and converts, would protest at the foolishness of our seeking any speculative philosophy at all: philosophy is essentially skill in the use of words--a language game--and the wise will not venture into any such games which go beyond the rules of sense-experience or call for a more than human skill. "That of which we cannot speak must not be spoken." While in an apostolic succession from G. E. Moore and Bertrand Russell who, with their "common-sense" emphasis on the clarificatory function of philosophy, protested at the beginning of the century against the verbal pretensions and priggishness of the Hegelians, Logical Positivism has, however, gone far beyond its forbears. But the Logical Positivists are right when they urge that they cannot, properly speaking, be refuted--they are evangelists of a Cause.

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[4] *Ibid.*, 18. [5] *Ibid*, 6, 16.

> All the Christian philosopher can do is to plead an alternative cause, which while admitting much of value in their approach avoids what seems to him their inadequacies. ...the Christian philosopher will be wise to heed, if wiser not to follow, the Positivist banners.[6]

The alternative that Ramsey urged in the 1940's, a "form of Idealism",[7] avoided following the positivist banners and only heeded their work by trying to show that an alternative approach is possible, given Ramsey's conception of experience. That alternative did not claim to picture the way the world is, but rather to outline an alternative *conception* of philosophy in which metaphysics as a verbal scheme could find its proper place. Only one ontological claim was explicitly made: Experience is Encounter, not the passive reception of sense-data. The whole "Outline" can be understood as an attempt to show the difference between his presupposition and those of the narrow empiricists by working out some implications of the presupposition underlying his thought. In the "Conclusion" to the essay, Ramsey suggested the criteria by which his articulation--and by implication any philosophy--is to be tested:

> "By their fruits ye shall know them". That is a test which neither the wit of man nor the subtlety of the devil can make less searching, and it is the test for plain men, theologians and philosophers alike. Reflective experience arising from the immediate Encounter, must return thence: and philosophy must culminate in life itself.[8]

The final test of any philosophical system is the kind of life that it encourages. We shall see in Chapter Eight that this test is the final test of any system of religious language.

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[6] *Ibid.*, 2. [7] *Ibid.*, 9.

[8] *Ibid.*, 39. The reference to the devil is an oblique attack on the "representatives of Continental Protestantism" who are pictured as conceiving all philosophy as sinful and arrogant (p. 1).

Perhaps the most important criticism that could be made of this early work is that it is a species of what Ramsey himself would later call "airborne theology." Although the "Outline" displayed approaches to theological problems that were to be later refined and clarified, in no place, except for the fundamental claim that experience is encounter, is there a firm "empirical anchorage." Of course the conception of language contained in it is taken over primarily from contemporary empiricism: language portrays and/or communicates facts. Other functions of language are subordinated to this one. Even the "ancillary languages" are presumed to portray fact; no mention is made of other functions. Ramsey differed from the positivists in that he seemed to have a rather wider view of "facts" than they.

Although the Blue and Brown Books of Wittgenstein were circulating privately, and Waissman had read his paper "Language Strata"[9] to the Jowett Society in 1946, there is no evidence that Ramsey had made use of them at this time. In the "Outline" there are allusions to the *Tractatus Logico-philosophicus* of Wittgenstein and to the *Principia Mathematica* of Russell and Whitehead. However, there is no trace in that essay of the broadening of empiricism that was exciting young philosophers just before and after World War II. His first major use of any of these developments occurred in his inaugural lecture as Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion in Oxford, delivered in December, 1951, published as *Miracles: An Exercise in Logical Mapwork*.[10] In this lecture the influence of Gilbert Ryle's treatise *The Concept of Mind*[11] is explicit. The inaugural lecture displayed a greater awareness of the varieties of language than the "Outline", yet many of the concerns and problems that characterize the earlier work remain. *Miracles* also clarified his approach to the problem of "experience and language."

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[9] Reprinted in *Words About God*, ed. I. T. Ramsey (London: SCM Press and New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

Near the beginning of the lecture, Ramsey "lays [his] cards on the table" by discussing the relationship of fact and language. He used the metaphor of the relationship between the countryside and maps of it to illustrate this relation:

> The widening of our language map will make it plain not only that there is no sacrosanct class of data to be called "observable facts", but that not even all functions of such "observable facts" exhaust that of which we have awareness. Different maps display different pictures of the countryside--each language, scientific or historical, for example, displays its own brand of "facts". The countryside we live in, however, is never exhausted by any one map or any number of them. Somehow it combines and includes all the facts which each map in its own way characteristically portrays and is more. Likewise that of which we are aware is not reducible without residue to "observable facts"--it combines them, and is more.[12]

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[10] Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952; reprinted in *Myth and Symbol*, ed. F. W. Dillistone (London: S.P.C.K., 1964). Citations to the latter.

[11] David Edwards reported that Ryle "had been heard to express a courteous scepticism" about Ramsey's inaugural lecture (cf. Edwards, *Memoir*, 35).

[12] Ramsey, *Miracles: An Exercise in Logical Mapwork*, 3.

The function of language is still understood to be the picturing of reality, but this picture is a limited one.

Science and history are the areas of language chosen to illustrate this point in *Miracles*. Science was characterized as permanently incomplete and peculiarly selective. It is permanently incomplete because "the facts themselves will always be inexhaustible. Space-time will always be infinitely divisible and infinitely extensible."[13] It is peculiarly selective because it abstracts certain features of any given experimental situation "as the cost of its first penetration into the facts of a given situation; such greater inclusiveness as it thereafter gains is always at the cost of moving to more and more abstract levels."[14] Science gained greater range by increased abstraction from the individual experimental situation. History, on the other hand, in its search for comprehensiveness worked "at a concrete personal level. In history we are not concerned with abstract uniformities but with a *concrete* level of *personal* transactions."[15] Hence, neither can be understood in terms of the other.

Ramsey claimed that each of these languages was logically incomplete and needed supplementation. He suggested that the supplementation and completion was to be found in the language of metaphysics:

> 1. The various languages of science (we suggested) need a metaphysical supplement (i) to complete each in the sense of "answering" "limiting questions", and (ii) so to unite all;

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[13] *Ibid.*, 6. [14] *Ibid.*

[15] *Ibid.*, 13. Italics in original.

> and also (iii) to raise their various abstractive patterns to that level of concreteness which belongs to the "given fact" the languages intend to picture.
>
> 2. The most comprehensive historical language (i.e. that historical language least limited by the limitations of the language instrument it incorporates) needs a metaphysical viewpoint (rather than science or economics or geography) as its instrument of selection and extension.
>
> In each of these two ways metaphysical words might be pictured as "marginal words" to any language map...[16]

Metaphysical words function as "co-ordinating, boundary or index words uniting all the several languages, each of which has its own particular logic."[17] The logic of metaphysical words differs from the logic of those words 'at home' in any of the subordinate languages. He called metaphysics a "kata-language," and claimed that it required an "apex word" to complete it. One example of an apex word is Bradley's "Absolute."[18]

Ramsey argued for "I" as one of the metaphysical words. He claimed that "persons" has the same "index status" (later he would say "logic") as "I." Yet these words were not to be considered simply as regulative words, or as a pious jingle, but in fact were to be justified as meaningful by an appeal to experience:

> The ultimate justification of metaphysical words lies in the fact that there is a non-inferential awareness more concrete than the observable facts which characterize it abstractly and objectively. Metaphysical words are, then, related in a curious way to the residue; and any *total* language map relates at once to the concrete non-inferential awareness and to the "data" which are abstractively discernible.[19]

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[16] *Ibid.*, 14-15. [17] *Ibid.*, 15.

[18] *Ibid.*, 17 [19] *Ibid.*, 21.

Subjectively, this was an appeal to the notion of "I" as more than the history of my life from an observer's point of view. Objectively, this appeal is to the 'Other' that is encountered or disclosed, an 'Other' that was always more than what could be said to describe it. Ramsey suggested that descriptive phrases of the logic appropriate to "me-active," *i.e.*, those events and actions of one's life that do not disclose one's *personal* activity, actually belong to a scientific language, while phrases that talk of "I-active," *i.e.*, those actions that show one's personally-backed activity, are of a different logic and belong to a metaphysical language. He went on to draw an analogy to this in talk of the environment. He makes a distinction between "'general' activity and 'personal' activity, a distinction which can be expressed alternatively as one between 'first-order' activity and 'second-order' activity."[20] The first type of activity is to be talked of in scientific or observer's language, while the second type is to be talked of in metaphysical language which attempts to disclose the personal actor(s) through activity. In the case of miracles, there would be no sense of talking of "miracle" in scientific language because "miracle" refers to God's special activity, appropriately spoken of in metaphysical language. The concept of "providence," however, could belong in the former category, since it referred to God's general activity.

However, Ramsey claimed that these two "types" of activity were not two activities but one. He used Ryle to support this argument by an appropriation of Ryle's argument for one "activity" and one "world," contained in *The Concept of Mind*. The two languages used to talk of activity are not talking of two kinds of activity, but are different ways of talking of one activity. As Ryle claimed that more than one kind of explanatory description may be required for one activity, so Ramsey accepted that claim and further applied it not only to individuals, but also to *all* the activity that we confront.[21] The point of the argument is summarized by Ramsey in the following:

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[20] *Ibid.*, 24. This concept is greatly revised in *Models for Divine Activity*, Ch. 2.

> Not only have we tried to show how the conflict with science is a pseudo-conflict, or, more positively, to justify a use for the word "miracle" which gives it a place in historical language. We have also tried to set the word "miracle" on a total language map which includes a metaphysical index...this comes to saying that we have preserved the distinctiveness of miracle not at the cost of some scientific scandal about empirical events, but by positing, on the basis of our experience of persons, a greater complication than we might have originally expected in the activity of God himself.[22]

Yet this map is not ultimate, for some other map may do the job of integrating the various descriptive languages as well as or better than the one proposed.

Near the end of the lecture Ramsey concluded the constructive part of the argument by claiming that we must have no illusions about the adequacy of whatever linguistic map we may use to find our way around. He then further claimed:

> After all, it is only a map to understand as best we can that of which we are non-inferentially aware, which is the Fact all

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[21] Cf. *Ibid.*, 20. Ramsey refers to Ryle, *The Concept of Mind*, 50-51.

[22] *Ibid.*, 29.

> of us are endeavouring all the time to understand and describe better... So it is in one good sense of the word "faith" that we embrace any scheme we have, and also set it more concretely in such an experience as worship... This is perhaps to say that there is, in the end, something not altogether unlike Wittgenstein's one-time mysticism, something like scientific wonder, something like religious faith, which is the justification of metaphysics...[23]

Whether Ramsey thought that this justification of a conceptual scheme by a fact, attitude, experience, or feeling is to be understood as a psychological or a logical justification is unclear. Nor is it clear just how this "something" is to be differentiated from the mysticism, wonder and faith to which it is similar, or whether all of these are understood as expressions of the same basic intuition. These kinds of problems, present in his first major published work, will be seen to recur in Ramsey's later works.

However, *Miracles* did mark the beginning of a major transition in Ramsey's method. In this lecture, he no longer pleaded for an alternative to positivism as he did in the "Outline," but rather made use of the developments occuring in empirical philosophy. Descriptive language retained its primary place, yet at least one other kind of language that did not fit in a purely descriptive scheme--metaphysics--was recognized. Metaphysical words were seen as functioning differently from the words of the descriptive sciences, and as relating to experience in a different way. Whereas the descriptive languages portray or map experience abstractly, metaphysical words attempt to capture the "non-inferential awareness" of the encountered Other in a more concrete way. Whatever problems were present in it, *Miracles* was significant for two reasons. First, it displayed improved clarity, with much of the ambiguous idealistic jargon of "The Concept of the Eternal" and "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy" abandoned. Second, it showed how one problematical concept, "miracle," could benefit from an analysis that used the tools of recent empirical philosophy. There was also the rough beginning of a distinctive theory of language, but since that appeared more clearly in the next stage of Ramsey's development, it will be considered below.

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[23] *Ibid.*, 29-30.

The greatest single deficiency in this work is the lowly status Ramsey ascribed to language: "it is only a map..." Ramsey recognized the tentativity of language, but it is not clear how important the assertions of any "map" or "language game" were. Using language is the only way to understand what we are aware of. Although there may be many different maps, the countryside cannot be traversed or understood without one of them. While Ramsey's claim that "activity" was the key metaphysical word may be appropriate, until one is prepared to offer a tool better than language, a way of traversing the countryside with a better guide than a map, the task at hand is to improve the language or the map. While it may be crucial to point out that our language is like a map, and not like the countryside, this is a weak analogy that understates the fact that language is necessary for understanding.

It could be objected that there is a more important deficiency present and that the lowly status ascribed to language is its result. It could be objected that Ramsey's theory proposed a "picture theory" of language, a theory that was in trouble some twenty years earlier and which, for the most part, had been abandoned before Ramsey's inaugural lecture was given.[24]

In a sense this is correct, for Ramsey's attempt to relate language to experience did take the descriptive-discursive forms of language as primary. However, the metaphor of the map also has some affinity with a non-picturing analysis, *e.g.*, the work of the 'later' Wittgenstein, who wrote:

> 123. A philosophical problem has the form: "I don't know my way about."
> 124. Philosophy can in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it.
> For it cannot give it any foundation either.
> It leaves it as it is.[25]

Ramsey's mapping of miracles could as well be understood as an attempt to show the way about. Ramsey followed the first two aphorisms, although he attempted to do what the third said could not be done. Thus, the criticism of *Miracles* as espousing a picture theory of meaning is correct, but only to the extent that the various areas of language were understood as picturing reality. It is incorrect in so far as the total language map included non-picturing words (at least) as index and margin words. Unfortunately, the metaphor of the map seems to entail both picturing and guiding. Later, Ramsey used the metaphor less, but the notion that at least one of the functions of philosophy is to map one's way about still underlay much of his later work.

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[24] Cf. J. O. Urmson, *Philosophical Analysis: Its Development Between the Two World Wars* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1956) especially pp. 141-45 where "picturing facts" is discussed. However, also see Bertrand Russell's review article in *Hibbert Journal*, LIV (July, 1956), pp. 319-29 which presents a rather different view of this history.

[25] L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Third Edition, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968), 49e.

Of course other problems appear here, too: the lack of articulated justification for the proposed metaphysical scheme, and the lack of substantial argument for the necessity of "kata-language" to unite the various discursive languages. *Miracles* was an inaugural lecture, the beginning of a process and a tenure, not complete in itself, but a starting point significant in that Ramsey was now attempting to use empirical philosophy, rather than offering an alternative to it, as he had done during his tenure at Cambridge.

An unpublished essay, "Theology and Language: Some Illustrative Examples,"[26] marked the next step in the evolution of Ramsey's thought.

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[26] I am not sure when this undated essay was written, but the most likely dating is 1953 for the following reasons: (1) Basil Mitchell has notes to a discussion of a Ramsey paper from that year which include reference to phrases and themes in this essay, and in none other extant; (2) among Ramsey's paper is a letter from Antony Flew (dated in 1954) rejecting a paper Ramsey sent Flew for possible inclusion in *New Essays in Philosophical Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1955) and there is no other extant essay that seems appropriate for submission for that collection; (3) the essay is mimeographed, so the papers inferred in (1) and (2) may be preliminary to this version, so this version may be later than 1953; (4) I found the essay among material from the mid-1950's in the files and there is enough difference in substance from Ramsey's position in *Religious Language*, which was based on lectures given in 1955 and was published in 1957, to assume that "Theology and Language" precedes *Religious Language* by a year or more; (5) it is also substantially different enough from *Miracles* to imply that a dating of 1952 is unlikely. Thus, I date it "probably 1953, but possibly 1954-1956."

This essay eliminated even more jargon than *Miracles* did from Ramsey's earlier thought and proposed another metaphor for understanding language. In "Theology and Language," Ramsey proposed to lay out a point about fact and a point about language "which together constitute both a suitable response to the challenge of contemporary philosophy, and a base line from which we may develop a framework of theological language"; this is followed by illustrative examples.[27] The point he wanted to make about language was that it "can be analyzed into what may be called areas, strata, or levels, and must be so analyzed if various puzzles and paradoxes are to be avoided."[28] Each of these levels or areas is public, has characteristic words and structures, and communicates characteristic insights into the situation to which it refers. The most generally useful area is "common sense language." The mixing of the various areas, *e.g.*, physics and common sense, gives "absurdities, dilemmas, paradoxes, confusions, and nonsense."[29] The clearest example of this analysis into levels is found in scientific language. Ramsey wrote:

> It is notorious that the specialist development of discursive knowledge, especially in the sciences with their notion of complementary languages, has emphasized the logical isolation of those areas of language; has emphasized indeed the notion of levels which we are trying to exemplify. No longer can we properly speak of a tree of knowledge; the appropriate metaphor is rather that of a departmental store without stairs or lift.[30]

On the other hand the desire for a unified language cannot be satisfied by making one of these levels the most "real" one; nor is endless explanation of some event at different levels a satisfactory outcome. How is a unified language, demanded by "one world," to be provided? How is apparently interminable explanation ever to be concluded? His answer was in terms of "lift-index words" to provide access to various levels and of a special logical move to a "final option or irreducible posit" that ended explanation:

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[27] Ramsey, "Theology and Language," 1.

[28] *Ibid.* [29] *Ibid.*, 2. [30] *Ibid.*

> The only answer as I see it, is that we must have words which belong to no level whatever, which fall in an area of their own, but which nevertheless must be used to supplement or complete levels. If we take our departmental store metaphor, the solution to specialist isolation is a lift--something which can be part of the floor at any level, yet is not in itself any floor. Or, if we think of the chapters of a composite book of essays as being something like language areas, we want something like the index of the book when [sic] alone perhaps the unity of the book is portrayed. What then are these peculiar lift-index words? As our brief example may have already suggested, "I" is such a word and it could be argued that "person" and "God" could be given something like the same status. "I'm I" is a logical kinsman of "God is God": "I am that I am"--even though a fuller story would be wanted--of "God is love". At any rate, the picture is of several language levels tied together by various index words and...I think we could defend taking the word "God" as what, to use an obvious metaphor, may be called an apex word--that word which was the keystone of the whole structure.[31]

Ramsey also noticed that because his proposed "index-words" fall outside any of the levels, a critical question arises: "What do these odd words refer to? What empirical anchorage have they?"[32] The various areas of language refer to sense-experiences or sense-data. The lift-index words go beyond sense-data to refer to "a fact which, as we would expect, demands all the levels of public language and more." This is the fact of what "is generally called (misleadingly) self-awareness...

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[31] *Ibid.*, 3-4. [32] *Ibid.*, 4.

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a fact which ex-hypothesi can never be described, but only evoked, induced or shown."[33] These words refer to that excess of "I-awareness" over "me-awareness," of awareness of myself as personally active over awareness that can be adequately talked of in the narrative of the events of my life. The fact of this excess for persons (and analagously for God) is why "Berkeley had to introduce notions besides ideas."[34]

He went on to describe some of the situations in which such awareness can originate, suggesting that occasions of profound religious experience (understood most broadly; later he will call these occasions cosmic disclosure situations) are the empirical anchorage for these peculiar words. He concluded:

> Here then are our suggestions about the structure of theological language and its empirical reference. The whole logical problem of theological language is to elucidate the index words, and above all, the apex word "God", by means of the different levels. The problem is to do level-justice to "God" *and more*. We have therefore to indulge in what, from the point of view of level language, is impropriety. Only in this way can we do justice to that "mystery" which eludes all objective language and which theology must emphasize; and yet at the same time only in straight level-language can we talk intelligibly about it.[35]

Ramsey suggested that qualified models can both do justice to the "mystery" and be intelligible. To form a qualified model one takes words from a "level-language" as a model (and "all metaphors are models"). Having "secured intelligibility by means of such a model, we create the impropriety and preserve the mystery by means of a qualifier." A qualifier is intended to evoke an awareness of mystery by expanding or contracting one's vision to a point at which the spatio-temporal elements are toned down or obliterated.[36]

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[33] *Ibid.* Compare *Religious Language*, 15-16, 42-43, 53-54.

[34] *Ibid.* [35] *Ibid.*, 5.

Having laid out a point about language, that it is composed of levels, and a point about fact, that not all facts are completely describable in public language, Ramsey discussed his illustrations of his thesis and concluded as follows:

> So at least we may claim that [this] is an *alternative* for bringing new life to old and complex controversies; to help us defend the logical improprieties that so often are a stumbling block to our pastoral ministries... If you think that its tendency is to make theology "verbal" you are right if you mean by this that it would invent no "entities" beyond necessity. But at the same time I would emphasise that in the end the one factual reference it preserves is the one which alone matters, one given--in part elusively--in worship: God and his worship--starting and ending there. Need we trouble if we discover meanwhile that a whole host of metaphysical furniture--underlying substances--indelible characteristics, and so on--which some might have supposed to be inherited has in fact belonged only to a confusing dream.[37]

While the final sentence may be considered to be rhetorical, the postscript clarified the purpose for which the task had been undertaken and the basis on which it rested: to defend the odd language that both arises from and encourages situations of worship.

This essay showed a number of significant developments in Ramsey's method. First, "abstractives" were not discussed. Second, the notion of

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[36] *Ibid.*, 5-6. This is clarified in *Models and Mystery*; see Chapter Five, where the status and function of qualified models are discussed.

[37] *Ibid.*, 19. Compare *Religious Language*, 214-16, where this paragraph is developed.

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language as a map was missing and the elements of a picture-theory of language present in *Miracles* were gone. "Theology and Language" attempted to concentrate on analyzing and understanding language and so to make room for some kinds of language considered meaningless by the positivists. It did not attempt to outline a general theory relating language to experience as "An Outline" and *Miracles* had done. Third, religious experience was related to other kinds of experience by suggesting that it can be discussed in ways similar to other kinds of experience. It was differentiated from other forms of experience because it cannot be discussed adequately in straight-forward, objective "level-language." Fourth, the metaphysical conceptions that undergirded *Miracles* are not a main part of the argument of this essay. The only ontological claim Ramsey made was that experience is subject-object in structure. This claim, as noted in the previous chapter, underlay every discussion Ramsey attempted. Seeking an empirical, experiential anchor for religious language remained a key element in his attempt to stake a claim for the faith dimension. Finally, Ramsey introduced his qualified models for the first time in this essay. The discussion of them was very rough and imprecise; I shall discuss qualified models in Chapter Five, referring primarily to Ramsey's later works where this subject was clarified.

Perhaps the most interesting point of this essay is a metaphor never further developed in any of Ramsey's published works, the "departmental store" metaphor. Traces of it appeared in *Religious Language*,[38] but in

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[38] Cf. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 41, 47, 53.

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places in later works where this metaphor would have been appropriate, there occur sentences like, "What has happened since G. E. Moore is that (a) we have come to appreciate more and more the vast logical variegations which language displays, and (b) we have come to have different ideas altogether about the 'meaning' of words and sentences."[39] The explicit claim that metaphysics could provide the "lift-index" words, presided over by an "apex-word" to unite the various areas or levels of discourse was not further developed and the "departmental-store" metaphor was abandoned. Yet the claim that such utterances have an anchorage and justification distinguishable from the anchorage and justification of 'plain' utterances remained, especially in terms of the Berkeleyan notions and in terms of the "systematic elusiveness" of both "I" and "God." While the metaphor of the lift may have introduced more problems than it solved, a full presentation of the theory that this metaphor exemplifies might have clarified the relation between religious and scientific language (the latter as one or more of the level-languages) more clearly than Ramsey's typical discussion of that relation:

> We can regain the old ideal, alike of science and metaphysical theology, for one map, only when that map loses in the end its purely scientific character; only when it sponsors some metaphysical words of which "mass", "force", "evolution", were once favourites, though I have outlined a means of substituting "God" for them all. I have suggested that the scientist can only sesure his wildest dreams when he becomes religious. At the same

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[39] Ramsey, "Contemporary Empiricism: Its Development and Theological Implications" in *The Christian Scholar*, XLIII (Fall, 1960), 181; reprinted in *Christian Empiricism,* 11-12.

> time the theologian can only secure his wildest dreams when he becomes scientific.[40]

Articulating such a scheme was one of Ramsey's goals. Although it is clear he never reached it, he believed that such a scheme was a possibility as an "empirical metaphysics."[41]

II

The concerns that characterized "Theology and Language," especially the empirical anchorage of religious language and the structure of talk of God in terms of qualified models, were clarified in the final stage of the evolution of Ramsey's thought. This stage began with *Religious Language*. Although he later modified, clarified and expanded the theory presented there, this was his major published work. In it he was no longer concerned to display a full-scale theory of all language. He attempted to display the logical connections among types of religious language and some other kinds of language and to show how religious language was anchored or grounded in the situation of "cosmic disclosure."

Three important and interrelated terms are introduced in this work as an interpretation of Joseph Butler's *Analogy of Religion Natural and*

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[40] Ramsey, "Religion and Science: A Philosopher's Approach" in *Christian Empiricism*, 157.

[41] Ramsey's intention (and his failure) to construct a unified metaphysical map is clear in "Fact, Metaphysics and God," where two approaches to a scheme are mixed, one based on Berkeley's notions, and the other using Russell's theory of incomplete symbols and Bradley's degrees of truth (although in a manner different from Bradley).

Revealed to the Constitution and Course of Action (1736). The terms, *disclosure, discernment*, and *commitment* intended to describe the objective, cognitive and affective aspects of a certain sort of experience or situation.[42] In a disclosure situation, one responds with discernment and commitment to the "other" that discloses itself. The type of discernment that characterizes religious situations is like a discernment of ourselves as living agents.[43] The kind of commitment that characterizes religious situations is like the commitment that a poor swimmer displays in attempting to rescue a drowning child from a river when there is little or no hope of effecting a rescue. Ramsey concluded that "religion claims (a) a fuller discernment, to which we respond with (b) total commitment."[44] Ramsey then offered a group of examples to try to "make it plainer what we mean by calling the religious attitude a discernment-commitment."[45] In stories of interpersonal relationships that "take on depth," by using Gestalt diagrams, Ramsey illustrated the kinds of insight he claimed to be similar to religious discernment: situations in which "the light dawns" or "the penny drops," situations that "come alive" when their depth is discovered. Ramsey intended to meet one probable criticism of his position in the following way:

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[42] As noted at the beginning of Chapter Three, "experience" is a vague term. In *Religious Language* Ramsey abandoned, for the most part, "experience" in favor of "situation," a more precise word delineating one sort of experience.

[43] *Religious Language*, 15-16. Cf. Chapter Two above.

[44] *Ibid.*, 19. [45] *Ibid.*, 20.

> ...the examples are certainly psychological in so far as they appeal to situations which are experienced, but they are *not* psychological in so far as they would reduce religion to what would be called "subjective experience"--whatever that phrase may mean...all these characteristically different situations, when they occur, have an *objective* reference and are, as all situations, *subject-object* in structure.[46]

Although it is not expressed here, the conception of experience as "I r O" underlay this discussion of religious discernment; hence, his opposition to an argument that would claim his illustrations are merely subjective--he claimed that there are no such situations.

To illustrate the commitment involved, Ramsey discussed situations of duty and of loyalty. After discussing mathematical commitment, he contrasted it with "the devotion we may give to a pastime, a ship or a person" and argued that "religious commitment does something to unite the distinctive features of both kinds of loyalty."[47] He claimed that religious commitment "combines the 'depth' of personal or quasi-personal loyalty--to a sport, a boat, a loved one--with the range of mathematical and scientific devotion. It is a commitment suited to the whole job of living..."[48] The example he used illustrates his concession that religious commitment may resemble the personal kind of commitment more than the scientific kind:

> When people comment adversely on someone you love, it is a measure of your love as to how far you will resist the tales told to weaken your affection. But if in the end they succeed, the result is, not that we exchange without any heart-searching, one

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[46] *Ibid.*, 30. Cf. Chapter Three above.

[47] *Ibid.*, 35. [48] *Ibid*

> sort of "axiom" for another--there is now a personal revolution, the whole of one's life is altered, we are "converted," our "*vision*" ceases. Here is something precisely parallel to religious commitment. If we have not been converted to it, we should certainly have to be converted out of it; converted, as William James would have said, "to infidelity"; when the world becomes "flat"--lacking in "depth"; vision and commitment disappear together.
>
> So we see religious commitment as a *total* commitment to the *whole* universe; something in relation to which argument has only a very odd function; its purpose being to tell such a tale as evokes the "insight," the "discernment" from which the commitment follows as a response.[49]

This story also illustrates an ambiguity in Ramsey's argument: does commitment follow from discernment, or discernment and commitment depend on disclosure? While it seems that this story supports the former interpretation, the latter is preferred because it yields fewer problems in interpreting Ramsey and because it is more consistent with both his earlier and later writings. I view the last clause in the above quotation as an infelicity. It is not only commitment, but commitment-discernment as a response that is seen as bound up with "key words," "apex words," or "final endpoints of explanation" whose logic "resembles that of the words which characterize personal loyalty as well as that of the axioms of mathematics,"[50] each of which can express an ultimate claim.

This reflection carried Ramsey to the consideration of religious *language*: "if our examples have done something to indicate the kind of empirical basis which belongs to religion, what do they tell us about religious language?" He answered:

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[49] *Ibid.*, 40-41. Emphasis added in lines 6-7.

[50] *Ibid.*, 41.

> ...for the religious man "God"is a key word, an irreducible posit, an ultimate of explamation expressive of the kind of *commitment* he professes. It is to be talked about in terms of the object-language over which it presides, but only when this object-language is qualfied; in which case this qualified object-language becomes also currency for that odd *discernment*, with which religious *commitment*, when it is not bigotry or fanaticism, will necessarily be associated.[51]

There may be other "key words" besides "God," such as "country" for the patriot who declares, "My country right or wrong."[52] Whatever word is proposed as a key word to express an ultimate claim will have an "odd logic," according to Ramsey, in comparison to the logic of straight-forward observational language. While the ultimate claims that these key words express may in some way be justified, Ramsey implied that such justification is neither obvious nor easy.[53] The proper language to commend an ultimate claim is the language of qualified models. These are utterances partly drawn from areas of straight-forward observational language, but modified. The derived term is qualified in a way to show that the key word expressing an ultimate claim is not part of the language-area from which the derived term originated, but rather an irreducible posit entailed or presupposed by that area of language. Full discussion of qualified models and key words is reserved for Chapter Five.

In *Religious Language* Ramsey hardly mentioned the "Other" that is the objective aspect of the disclosure situation, that which one encounters in such a situation. Ramsey's discussion of two sorts of disclosure

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[51] *Ibid.*, 53. [52] *Ibid.*, 50

[53] *Ibid.*, 53. For a clarification of key words as part of what I shall call "primary religious language," see Chapter Five, section three, below.

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situations, "scientific" and "personal," is not best understood as specifying the only kinds of discernment-commitments that can arise. Each of these sorts of disclosures, rather, represents ideal types, differentiated by the subject's response and qualified by the subject's needs and intentions, to which various insights will roughly conform. A religious disclosure or cosmic disclosure is one which shows some affinities to both types; the chief difference is that in a cosmic disclosure an ultimate claim arises, rather than a scientific insight or a personal claim.

In the scientific type of disclosures, the discernment occurs "in a moment of insight when the universe [or part of it] discloses itself."[54] Especially in the case of mathematical disclosures, Ramsey claimed that "No one correct assertion in pure mathematics is ever wrong, though it may not always be useful; and it may not always be adequate for understanding a particular situation. But once correct, it is correct everywhere."[55] This broad catholicity is not usually accompanied by great emotion; he noted that there are "no placard-bearers in mathematical departments with legends like 'There'll always be a Euclid' or 'Prepare to meet thy Riemann today.'"[56]

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[54] Ramsey, *Models and Mystery* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 13.

[55] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 37.

[56] *Ibid*. Some scientific disagreements seem to me to be quite emotionally charged, *e.g.*, the debate over the relative influences of heredity and environment on human intelligence. In this case, the debate seems not to be about the discerned facts (*i.e.*, some people are smarter than others), but rather about how those facts are to be explained and about broad-ranging (although possibly not ultimate) claims sponsored by those theories.

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Personal disclosures are at the other end of the spectrum. These disclosures of something more than the "observables" of a body's behavior are frequently marked by great emotional upheaval, as the earlier story about the lover resisting the tales suggested. They are usually not universal, but tend to focus on particular persons. Ramsey characterized this type of disclosure with stories like the following:

> Our second example begins with a party all stiff and formal. Then, it happens that someone's dinner jacket splits unexpectedly up the back; or someone sits sedately on a chair which collapses beneath her. At once the party takes on "human warmth"; as we should say, "the ice breaks."[57]

If the person whose jacket rips is the Provost of the University, or if the person whose chair collapses is the Dean of the College of Arts, we no longer see him solely as THE PROVOST or her only as THE DEAN, but rather as human beings with human troubles. This peculiar discernment is given in a situation of personal disclosure--but what of the commitment involved here? It would be quite unusual for such a situation to be the beginning of a love affair. Ramsey claimed that once one discerns a *person* rather than THE DEAN or THE PROVOST (or even THE QUEEN or THE PRESIDENT), one is committed to respond to each as a person. In the context of a stiff party, the human dimension is disclosed with the disclosure of officials as 'real people,' as each an "I." The commitment in this case is in proportion to what is discerned--although in the example cited the appropriate response may be merely a shared laugh or a helping hand. But once this disclosure occurs, a *person* is revealed; and the appropriate responses are personal.[58]

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[57] *Ibid.*, 22.

Two key presuppositions lay behind Ramsey's discussion of disclosures. First, the final logical and metaphysical endpoints of explanation are persons and God.[59] In discerning a person's behavior, one may only be committed to believing that one can predict the other's behavior. Similarly, for scientific explanation, in discerning the behavior of the universe (or part of it), one may only be committed to believing that one can predict some natural phenomena. The constant in each case is that one perceives activity and understands it in terms of models that explain it. *All* explanations or models presupposed a perceived activity. But the activity presupposes an actor, and the endpoint of explanation is disclosure of the actor. In the case of a person, an "I" or agent, not completely understandable in terms of models, is disclosed. In the case of the universe, God is the disclosed actor.[60] In both cases, no understanding of any actor is possible without the use of models.

The second presupposition is Ramsey's version of the empiricists' maxim: "All knowledge arises from experience." In the case of scientific knowledge, an experience or set of experiences is organized in terms of scientific models. In the case of personal knowledge, the models may be of various sorts. No organization of experience is incorrigible, since any model may be improved, corrected or rejected in the light of further experience. The models one uses to understand the encountered "Other" are not ultimate, for the "Other" transcends what can be said about it, and the models can themselves be revised. Religious knowledge and religious language are not differentiated from other sorts of knowledge and language by source--*all* knowledge arises in experience--but by the form used for understanding and articulating that experience, and by the expressed scope of the objective referent. Religious language thus combines the depth of personal knowledge and the range of scientific knowledge, so that religious language can be said to express "total commitment to the whole universe."[61]

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[58] Cp. Ramsey, "On the Possibility and Purpose of Metaphysical Theology." 164-67.

[59] Cf. Chapter Three, *supra*.

[60] Whether or not this God is justifiably characterized as 'personal' depends primarily on whether that appelation "empirically fits." Cf. Ramsey, "A Personal God," and Chapters Two and Seven of this dissertation.

Ramsey's concern that religious language have an empirical anchorage, that it be grounded in a situation of cosmic disclosure, can be best evaluated in light of the evolution of his thought from an idealist metaphysics to a broadened empiricism. His concern to stake a claim for the faith dimension remained constant. But the old task of elaborating an alternative "verbal scheme in terms of metaphysical words"[62] was abandoned in favor of illustrating what "follows from grounding theological words and phrases in what I have called a characteristically religious situation."[63] Given that all knowledge arises from experience and that it can be expressed in language, then it is necessary to ground talk of God in experience, but experience understood, not as the passive reception of sense-data, but as active encounter.

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[61] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 41.

[62] Ramsey, "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," 6.

[63] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 9.

Now Ramsey did not clearly distinguish between religious and metaphysical utterances.[64] In both "Theology and Language" and "Fact, Metaphysics and God," metaphysical words and "key words" are construed as are the "key words" and "irreducible posits" of religious language. All of these show similarities to Berkeley's "notions." This practical identification of some religious and some metaphysical utterances lay behind the criticism of Ramsey's work by Ninian Smart, who claimed that it "is only an analysis of theistic language. This is not the only kind of religious language."[65] Smart's contention that Ramsey's theories were unable to account for other sorts of religious language is *prima facie* accurate. However, it was Ramsey's claim that whatever sorts of religious language there might be, these utterances must be related, however derivatively, to cosmic disclosure situations.[66] Certainly Ramsey discussed

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[64] C. B. Cohen, "The Logic and Ontology of Ian T. Ramsey's Theory of Religious Language" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1970), has noted this (Cf. pp. 49*ff*). In most other respects, however, Cohen's presentation of Ramsey's work is rather different from mine, primarily because she did not have access to unpublished materials, nor did she cite any publications after 1969. She also presupposed that Ramsey's work could be treated without regard to its internal development, a presupposition I have rejected.

[65] Ninian Smart, "The Intellectual Crisis of British Christianity," *Theology* LXVIII (January, 1965), 33. Ramsey's reply, a letter to the editor, is in the same volume, pp. 109-11. Both are substantially reprinted in *Christian Empiricism*, 229-39.

[66] Cf. Ramsey, *On Being Sure in Religion* (London: Athlone Press, 1963), Chapter Two and Chapters Five and Six below.

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Christian language almost exclusively; but in so far as any religious tradition uses language that involves an ultimate claim, that claim is ascribed to a cosmic disclosure situation and subject to evaluation. These ultimate claims are the logical (if not actual) basis of whatever other sorts of language is called "religious." Unless this identification of some religious and metaphysical utterances is noted and the claim that religious language has a complex structure is seen, the contention that Ramsey's analysis was limited to theistic language is not surprising; however, as I shall show in the next two chapters, it is wrong. There the distinction between primary and derivative religious language will show that much of the criticism expressed by Smart, Evans, McClendon and Smith, and others about the narrow range of Ramsey's theory is misguided.

III

Attempts to relate language to experience or to 'the world' often stumble by adopting an outmoded referential theory of meaning. Thus, C. B. Cohen has contended that "Ramsey identifies the context and the reference of terms, and conflates any distinction between them... Basically he uses a referential theory to determine the meaning of words."[67] Cohen found this unacceptable because it supposedly led to a claim on the part of Ramsey that religious language was not representative or descriptive, but only evocative, and void of cognitive content.

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[67] C. B. Cohen, "The Logic of Religious Language," *Religious Studies* IX (1973), 149. She cited a passage from *On Being Sure in Religion*, 62, to support her claim.

But in Cohen's criticism, and in Ramsey's work, "meaning" is a word functioning in a variety of ways which neither clarified adequately. Cohen noted that Ramsey differed from Wittgenstein in this regard. Wittgenstein's advice, "Don't look for meaning, look for use," has been interpreted in a number of ways. One of them, that meaning *is* use, seems to be incorrect, for Wittgenstein does not identify the two terms in the *Philosophical Investigations*.[68] Wittgenstein's advice was, "When you are troubled about the meaning of some expression, I advise you to try looking for its use." This advice holds whether or not meaning is use.

Ramsey had noticed that there are other uses of "meaning" in addition to "use."[69] First, one can be asking for the *context*: if one notices "a terrific commotion in an undergraduate's room--heat, noise, smoke, jostling," one can ask "What's the meaning of this?...and the reply comes: 'It's Jim's twenty-first birthday party.'"[70] When told the context, we know the meaning of the event. Second, we can ask the *significance* of an event: upon noticing that Jim is drunk, we can ask him "What does this drunken state mean, Jim" And he can reply "I broke my pledge again." One can also ask for the significance of a report of Jim's drunken state by another friend and receive the answer, "When I said Jim's drunk, I meant that he had broken his pledge." Third, as Wittgenstein showed, we can ask for a *reference*. "Who did you mean when you said Jim died--Jim Jones or Jim Smith?" When given the reference, we understanding the meaning of the report. Fourth, we can ask for *use*: "What did you mean when you screamed, 'God damn the coppers'?" To understand this we need the *reference* for "coppers"--policeman, futures on the metal market, coins that don't fit in parking meters--and then its *use*, *e.g.*, "Oh, I wasn't really cursing; I was just venting my frustration." We are told that the curser was simply behaving in his conventional manner. Finally (as indicated by the last example), implicit in these uses of "meaning" are various permutations and combinations so that in trying to understand the "meaning" of an event or utterance, we may be asking for various combinations of (1) context, (2) significance, (3) reference, and (4) use.

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[68] Cf. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, Third edition, tr. G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan, 1968), #43, where he said that not all of meaning can be defined by use and that sometimes meaning is explained by pointing to the bearer of the term.

[69] Cf. Ramsey, *On Being Sure in Religion*, 62-63. John Wisdom, in his "The Meanings of the Question of Life," *Paradox and Discovery* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1965), 38-42, made a similar point.

[70] *On Being Sure in Religion*, 62.

Now Ramsey tended to use "meaning" when he meant "context," "significance," and/or "reference." But he rarely talked of meaning as "use"--although the whole of his work can be understood as an attempt to describe the proper use of theological expressions. Ramsey's theory of meaning was not referential, as Cohen thought; the 'meaning' (by which she apparently meant 'use') of religious language is multiple, as we shall see in Chapter Five. However, Ramsey's theory of the *justification* of religious language was in part referential, for unless some specimen of religious language arose in, or presupposed language that itself arose in, a cosmic disclosure situation, it may be understandable, but according to Ramsey,

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it is not justified.[71] Only in the sense that part of the use of religious language is to refer to God, the ultimate, or the universe, and the fact that this use is recognized by Ramsey, can his theory of 'meaning' be said to be referential.

Ramsey intended to justify the use of "God" by showing that such use is grounded in experience, specifically in the situation of cosmic disclosure. The use of "God" or any other term incorporated as part of an ultimate claim is not justified except in the cases where there is such a grounding. The appeals he made to "cosmic disclosure situations," to a "fact not capturable in descriptive language," and to a "non-inferential awareness" point to the experience in which this use is based and locate the situation in which the reference is obvious.[72] The problem that remains is to discover whether or not this attempt to justify, rather than merely to elaborate, the Christian use of 'God' is either necessary or successful.

Ramsey believed it to be necessary. But exactly what does this "empirical anchorage" do? Dallas M. High suggested that "anchoring" is giving reasons for one's belief.

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[71] In Chapter Seven of this work, we shall note that the cosmic disclosure situation functions as a "general defensive justificatory thesis" in Ramsey's work.

[72] This is to reiterate the claim, made at the beginning of Chapter Three, that Ramsey's theory is neither 'fideistic' nor 'non-cognitive.' Ramsey's opposition to a fideistic position is made clear in "Paradox in Religion" in *The Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume XXXIII (1959), reprinted in *Christian Empiricism*, 98-119.

> To give "reasons" or to "anchor" my belief, as an act that displays something which will count for it, is also a human act. "Anchoring" is an act of and in this world and life. To give "reasons," "justification," "rationale," or display an "anchor" for my (our) religious credal-doctrinal beliefs is not to traverse very far, if at all, from these quite ordinary and practical but crucial aspects of "giving-a-good-account" of my (our) mundane ways of saying, doing, thinking, believing and reasoning.[73]

High goes on to claim that there is no rule to cover the step from the anchoring to the belief, that such a move cannot guarantee a belief, noting that there are "numerous, almost inexhaustible, kinds of 'anchorings' one can give: empirical anchorings, anchorings in authority, anchorings in history (Christianity has traditionally claimed to be a historical religion), etc."[74] While no anchorage is sufficient to justify one's belief, as High has shown, some anchorage is nonetheless necessary --and that includes anchoring one's belief that the "authority" or "history" or "revelation" or "experience" is the final word. The question then arises, "How is the anchor to be anchored?"

Ramsey's answer was that the anchor is the anchor. An anchor is a "final option," an "irreducible posit," what I call an ultimate claim. Ramsey recognized these as the basis of religious language: "We may expect religious language to contain significant tautologies, tautologies whose function is to commend those key words--those ultimates of explanation--which...arise in connection with religious language, and especially

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[73] Dallas M. High, *Language, Persons, and Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 210.

[74] *Ibid.*, 211.

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with its character as a commitment."[75] A closer look at the anchorings suggested by High shows that, for the Christian for instance, it is not "authority" that is the anchor, but the authority of "God's church" or "God's word." It is not revelation that is the anchor, but "the revelation of God in Jesus of Nazareth." It is not experience that is the anchor, but a certain kind of experience, the experience of "God's amazing grace." These anchorages are ultimate claims that "God has acted." "Perhaps this act was not performed directly on me," a Christian could claim, "but it was an act performed for me and shown to me by the Church and the Bible, by my fellow-travellers and forebears."[76] But this analysis introduces a further question, "Is God the final anchor?" For the Christian, yes. As Ramsey put it, "Of *what* are we sure? What is left? I answer, all that matters--*God*. But, you will say...can no more be said? The answer is that it can--but never without logical circumspection."[77] What "God" means, and how Ramsey used the term "God," is to be discussed in the next chapter.

John Wisdom once claimed, "It seems to me that some belief as to what the world is like is of the essence of religion."[78] Ramsey would agree with that. Some metaphysical insight or belief is, on his account,

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[75] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 44-45.

[76] Cp. Ramsey, "The Authority of the Church Today," esp. 79-80.

[77] Ramsey, *On Being Sure in Religion*, 21.

[78] John Wisdom, "Religious Belief" in *Paradox and Discovery*, 54.

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part of the anchorage of every religion. However, such beliefs do not distinguish "religion," for metaphysical claims may also lie at the basis of other forms of thought and life. It would be a mistake to consider a metaphysical claim as a sufficient basis for any religion. Ramsey's claim that a cosmic disclosure--a disclosure that may be sudden or slowly dawning--is the empirical anchorage of religious language acknowledges that a metaphysical claim is necessary.

The relation of religious language to 'experience,' *i.e.*, for Ramsey to the situation of cosmic disclosure, is not determined, as High noted by a "neatly established logical step or rule."[79] However, it is one of the ways in which one's belief can be defended or justified. Ramsey's claim was stronger than High's: that a disclosure of the-way-the-world-is not only is part of the justification of religious beliefs, but also delineates the genesis of (primary) religious language. The only claim that is made here is that such language arises from experience--and experience is never purely subjective--and thus has a referent.[80] This basis gives no guarantee for the appropriateness of the language that is used, but only claims that religious language is, among other things, referential. *What* the referent is conceived as being is not relevant to this, but only *that* there is a referent.

What Ramsey's position comes to is that "cosmic disclosures" are occasions of experience in which fundamental metaphysical claims are

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[79] High, *Language, Persons, and Belief*, 210.

[80] Cf. Chapter Three for discussion of this.

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grounded. But how do we evaluate this claim? Some have suggested that what Ramsey did was to give the name "God" to certain types of "penny-dropping" experiences.[81] In a trivial sense this is correct, but only if experience is to be understood in the way that Ramsey understood it. Another suggestion is that this notion of the generation of (*primary*) religious language is interesting, but not proven.[82] This, too, is at least partially correct, especially if the distinction between primary and derivative forms of religious language is not made and the practical identification or primary religious and metaphysical claims is not noted. However, it is extremely difficult to arrive at an unobjectionable vantage point from which this claim can be judged, as the history of the debate over the logic of religious language has made clear. So to evaluate Ramsey's claims here, it seems the best questions to ask are these: "What work was this claim, that (primary) religious language is grounded in and anchored by cosmic disclosure, intended to do; and how well does it do it?"

The claim was primarily directed against those sceptics who claimed that, while religious language may make some sense, there is no referent, other than the human, for talk of God. Perhaps the most succinct modern opposition was contained in A. J. Ayer's broadside, *Language Truth and Logic*. Ayer claimed that theistic language in particular, and metaphysical utterances in general cannot be true or false because they tell us nothing about the real world. Talk of God cannot be in conflict with scientific claims because the "sentences which the theist uses to express such 'truths' are not literally significant," and thus cannot be reasonably controverted.[83] At best, "religious knowledge" and "religious language" may express self-knowledge. The referent other than the speaker of such utterances cannot be scientifically investigated, so the statements made by a believer do not deal with matters of fact, and hence can be neither true nor false. Talk of God is nonsense, for the alleged referent of such talk is not factually, *i.e.*, scientifically, ascertainable. Against Ayer, it may simply be noted that there are more senses--uses--of 'fact' than the scientific, other ways for facts to be discovered than by empirical investigation, and other reasonable uses for language than the one Ayer noted. In proposing the notion of cosmic disclosure, Ramsey brought out these points.

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[81] Cf. Ninian Smart, "The Intellectual Crisis of British Christianity," in *Christian Empiricism*.

[82] Cf. J. W. McClendon and J. M. Smith, *Understanding Religious Convictions*, ch. ii.

Antony Flew's atheistic position was more subtle and better informed than Ayer's. Flew, however, proposed to examine the claims of Christians about God as an outsider, as a neutral philosopher. "The philosopher of religion," Flew claimed, "has as such no business to be counsel for either the prosecution or the defense. If any juridical model is apt, it is that of the examining magistrate."[84] However, in his approach to "traditional Christian theism," Flew assumed, not the role of neutral judge, as he

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[83] A. J. Ayer, *Language Truth and Logic*, Second Edition (New York: Dover Press, 1952), 118. Cf. also 115-17.

[84] A. G. N. Flew, *God and Philosophy* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1966), 26.

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claimed, but that of the adversary, the traditional non-Christian sceptic. By making the claim that "all assertion must involve a theoretical possibility of error precisely proportionate to its content,"[85] Flew implied that all assertions must necessarily be the expressions of hypotheses. He later referred to "the religious hypothesis."[86] But is this not a category mistake? Ramsey would certainly have claimed so. Flew wrote:

> We therefore conclude, though as always subject to correction by further evidence and further argument, that the universe itself is ultimate; and hence, that whatever science may from time to time hold to be the most fundamental laws of nature must, *equally provisionally*, be taken as the last words in any series of answers to questions as to why things are as they are. The principles of the world lie themselves "inside" the world.[87]

But is there not something equally as 'logically odd' about the 'hypotheses' that (1) the universe is ultimate; (2) science has the last word; (3) the principles of the world lie within the world; as about the "religious 'hypotheses'?" It seems that Flew was sponsoring a key word (science) commended by significant tautologies (apparently 1 and 3).

Yet Flew assumed the pose of the detached scientist, for his theories were subject to correction, on the basis of further evidence and argument. However, there is some evidence that Flew could neither evaluate nor admit. In his chapter on "Religious Experience" he argued that it is "impossible to rely for proof upon some supposedly self-authenticating experience."[88] While this is on the face of it persuasive, there are two problems. First, these "experiences" *may* indeed refer to something, *i.e.*, they may not be adequately characterizable as "purely subjective" or "self-authenticating." In denying that we can move from experience to the object allegedly experienced, Flew ignored the fact that in most cases it is appropriate to say that something is experienced and that inability to move directly from the experience to the experienced does not preclude some kind of evaluation of the claim concerning the experienced. Flew suggested that such experiences could be evaluated, but offered no clear suggestions concerning how to evaluate them. This leads to the second problem, that Flew threw these "evidences" out of court without a clear reason for saying *why* they should be thrown out of court, since he could see no way in which they could fit in his courtroom. This clearly marks him as a prosecuting attorney rather than an impartial magistrate.

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[85] *Ibid.*, 133. [86] *Ibid.*, 194

[87] *Ibid.* [88] *Ibid.*, 132

Ramsey worked against this sort of scepticism, characterized by a "narrow empiricism," a position unable to recognize its own commitments while attacking others' commitments. Flew's conclusions, quoted above, actually seem to be the presuppositions that underlie his entire argument. Such ultimate claims are cases of "cosmic disclosure" as much as religious cases, although, if these *are* Flew's ultimate claims, they would be seen as the "slowly dawning" type. The discourse used to characterize that claim can then be tested for empirical fit. It is not the case that the key-words and ultimate commitments of science are rational and those of religion irrational, but rather that both stand in need of justification. Ramsey's "empirical anchorage" was intended to do just this work: to stake a claim for the religious dimension by showing that in and of themselves, religious claims and talk arising from "religious" experience are no less justifiable than those claims that intended to deny any justifiability to "God" or to any other expression of ultimate commitment.

The second evaluational question, "How well does it work?" is a bit more problematical. It is not entirely clear why an ultimate claim must be part of the essence of religion, or why a cosmic disclosure is the basis of religion and the anchorage of religious language. An ultimate claim is not apparently implied by all the uses of "religion."[89] Yet claiming that Ramsey's theory is not proven does not seem a proper verdict, although it does seem plausible. It seems plausible, because, bluntly, there is no end in sight to the debates over religious language, and of the relation of religious language to religious "experience." Yet if "cosmic disclosure" is defined as a situation in which ultimate claims arise, as is implied in Ramsey's work--whether the claims arise in a flash of insight or as slowly dawning conclusions--it is unexceptionable that ultimate claims do arise and that "religion" seems to include them. It is not an adequate assessment of Ramsey's work to render a Scotch verdict, "not proven," because such a verdict could be rendered for any inductive generalization. I hope to show that the properly informative verdict is a qualified verdict: "Not proven, but quite probably true."

But this verdict can only be properly rendered after laying out the whole of the theory. If Ramsey's account of the rules "for theological

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[89] Cf. Chapter Three, pp. 85-86.

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stammering" is adequate to explain religious language, this is evidence in favor of a positive judgment. Thus, the current chapter tracing the evolution of Ramsey's thought on the relation of language to experience offers only part of the evidence. In the following chapters, Ramsey's final position will be exposed and explored; having explored the situation that gives rise to religious language, we can now explore the theory of the language itself.

CHAPTER FIVE

PRIMARY RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

One of the more important and often criticized aspects of Ian Ramsey's theory of religious language is his work on qualified models. On the one hand, if some traditional theological utterance cannot be construed as a qualified model, this is thought to upset his theory. On the other, if a proposed qualified model meets the criteria he set out, yet seems inappropriate or irreligious, the theory is considered so imprecise as to be useless.[1] The mistake of these criticisms is to construe qualified models as the whole of Ramsey's theory of religious language.

The causes for the concentration on this aspect of Ramsey's work are easy to understand. There is first the mode of publication of Ramsey's work: every book he published was based on lectures. Many of the shorter papers are also either revisions or transcripts of oral presentations. As previously noted, his mature thought was never drawn together in a single place. Second, his thought evolved over the period of his major publications. He recast themes from one writing to the next in response to criticism and suggestions, attempting to state his case more clearly. His exploration of his ideas in public, rather than in the seminar room or armchair left an impression of inconsistency in his work. The combination of the first two points yielded infelicities and obscurities in Ramsey's published works. Third, these were exaggerated because Ramsey was not precise in his use of some technical terms. For instance, he sometimes used "theological" and "religious" interchangeably.[2] His theory of justification of religious language, the theory of "empirical fit," is not very precise.[3] The mode of publication, the varying use of some important terms, and the exploratory style of his thought have all contributed to the feeling that his theory was 'loose' and his presentation 'lively,' a combination uncharacteristic of much philosophical and theological writings.

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[1] Cf. Cohen, "The Logic of Religious Language" in *Religious Studies* IX (1973), 143-55 and James F. Harris, Jr., "Models and Qualifiers" in *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* III (Summer, 1972), 83-92.

Yet contrasted with the 'loose' and 'lively' character of much of his work, Ramsey intended to be clear and tended to be consistent in his publications about the theory of qualified models. This part of his theory readily lent itself to discussion. This key aspect of his thought presented the articulation of the primary part of religious language, talk of God, the universe, or the ultimate. This novel departure combined the vivid imagery and symbolic language of faith with some traditional philosophical characterizations of God (*e.g.*, First Cause, Necessary Being) under a single rubric, "models." Qualified models played a role in every major work from 1957 onwards, as did their experiential base, the cosmic disclosure situation. Finally, qualified models are often identifiable by their grammatical form, so they are easy to spot and easy to construct. It is not difficult to see why this part of his theory has evoked considerable discussion.

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[2] For example, his title *RELIGIOUS Language: An Empirical Placing of THEOLOGICAL Phrases* did this. In Chapter Four, I noted that the use of "disclosure" and "discernment" varied in his work. As with those words, I shall attempt to use Ramsey's other terms in a way consistent with the whole of his thought wherever possible.

[3] That, however, may be its virtue. Cp. L. Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, #71: "Is it even always an advantage to replace an indistinct picture by a sharp one? Isn't the indistinct one often exactly what we need?"

I will contend that the theory of religious language propounded by Ian Ramsey was more complex than it appeared. His theory did not limit religious language to qualified models and did account for other sorts of religious language. His whole theory involved various levels of religious language, although this is a point Ramsey never clearly made. In order to explicate this contention this chapter will be divided into three sections: (I) What qualified models are; (II) What qualified models do; (III) The logic of key words. Chapter Six will complete the discussion of religious language by dealing with the hierarchical structure of Ramsey's theory and the relationship between primary religious language (which articulates claims that arise in a cosmic disclosure situation) and derivative religious language (whatever other language, justifiably called religious, that is logically dependent on or presupposes the ultimate claims of primary religious language). Chapter Seven will then go on to discuss the justification of religious language by the method of "empirical fit."

As I lay out this complex "logic of theological stammering," as Ramsey once called his work,[4] the analogy mentioned in Chapter Three: I:my body::God:world is presupposed. In the following chapters, the linguistic form of this analogy will be explicated. Just as I am not captured by the models constructed to talk about and understand me, so God is not captured by models constructed to talk about and understand the "other" encountered in a situation of cosmic disclosure. In neither case can it be assumed that talk will picture or capture me or God, nor that any single model will suffice to represent and evoke understanding of who I am or who (what) God is. Just as various models are needed to understand my activity (*e.g.*, teacher, husband, father, writer, 'nurse,' etc), so will various models be needed to speak of God.[5]

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[4] Ramsey, "Models and Mystery: Reply" in *Theoria to Theory* I, 3 (April, 1967), 263.

I. WHAT QUALIFIED MODELS ARE

In a general way everyone knows what a model is or could at least begin an ostensive definition of "model." Examples could include a child's toy train, some complex scientific model such as the double-helix of DNA, and possibly even terms like "she is a model child" or "his life is a model for all of us." But what do these have in common? How could they be organized? Ramsey suggested that two basic types of models can be distinguished, "picturing models" and "disclosure models." Picturing models, called scale models by Max Black, attempt to "reproduce in a relatively manipulable or accessible embodiment, selected features of the original."[6] Picturing models would include that toy train or an architect's miniature building.

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[5] It should be noted that Donald Evans has suggested that there may be a hierarchy or set of hierarchies of models (see his "Ian Ramsey on Talk About God" in *Religious Studies* VII (1971), 125-40, 213-26). H. P. Owen also seems to think that Ramsey's theory is well-formed in general, but he does not suggest what sorts of improvements [or repairs] it needed (see his "The Philosophical Theology of I. T. Ramsey" in *Theology* 74 [1971], 67-74).

Disclosure models (Black's "analogue models") were distinguished from picturing models in that "the making of analogue models is guided by the more abstract aim of reproducing the *structure* of the original" (as opposed to attempting to reproduce every detail in a scaled down version). This similarity of structure is what "mathematicians call isomorphism."[7] Ramsey expanded the distinction beyond the points he took from Black in order to show the reasons for preferring his names for the two different sorts of models. He wrote:

> Now my reason for preferring the title "disclosure models" is this. Black rightly emphasizes the point that there must be some sort of structural similarity, some sort of echo between the model and the phenomena it enables us to understand, while at the same time denying (as we would) sheer reproduction, replica picturing. But it is precisely such similarity with a difference that generates insight...it is because of their origin in disclosures--that I suggest the term "disclosure models" for models which arise not as pictorial replicas, but with structural echoes.[8]

Ramsey's examples of disclosure models included the structural formulae of chemistry and the human nervous system modelled as a computer.

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[6] Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, 3, quoting Max Black, "Models and Archetypes" in *Models and Metaphors: Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1962), 221.

[7] Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, 9-10, quoting Black, *op. cit.*, 222.

[8] *Ibid.*, 10.

It is not clear that there is a significant difference between the two types of models postulated by Ramsey. It is not clear why 'picture models' cannot arise from disclosure situations. In fact, the very examples that Ramsey gave of picture models in the sciences--Faraday's lines of force and Clark Maxwell's "'wonderful medium' filling all space"[9]--can be understood as having arisen in disclosure situations. In terms of model theory, the difference is epistemological. Proponents of a full-fledged scale model theory are epistemological realists: they believe the model mirrors what is there. The disclosure-analogue model theory entails no such commitment, but is compatible with a variety of epistemological bases. The difference between disclosure models and picture models is that the disclosure models, even if they are visual models, are not understood as picturing reality, while scale models are intended to picture the original. The importance of this distinction will appear later.

Besides the above distinctions in the status of scientific models, Ramsey also distinguished theological models from scientific ones. He differentiated them in terms of the reference of each sort of model and the kinds of discourse that can be generated from each. In terms of reference--or "ontological commitment"--of the scientific model, he claimed that "structurally the model must somehow or other chime in with and echo the phenomena. In this way the universe itself authenticates a model." In terms of discourse generated from the scientific model, his claim was

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[9] *Ibid.*, 8. [10] *Ibid.*, 13.

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that "in any scientific understanding a model is the better the more prolific it is in generating deductions which are then open to experimental verification and falsification."[11] Both types of model arise in a moment of insight or disclosure.

The theological model must also chime in with the phenomena, but the phenomena which it echoes are not limited, as are the phenomena with which the scientific models deal. He put it this way:

> There must be...certain situations of a cosmic character, which in virtue of some feature or other echo, chime in with, are isomorphous with other situations in which we speak, for example, of strong towers, of kingship, of fathers and sons, and the two together, because of the common feature, generate insight.[12]

These situations, which Ramsey called cosmic disclosure situations, are those in which one's vision or insight is not limited to certain phenomena or local characteristics. Rather, the insight gleaned must be universal in import, in some way applicable always and everywhere, an ultimate claim.[13] The discourse generated from the disclosure was not to be tested by verification or falsification of deductions based on the model. Rather, the theological model was to be "judged by its stability over the widest possible range of phenomena, by its ability to incorporate the most divergent phenomena not inconsistently."[14] This second consideration

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[11] *Ibid.*, 14. [12] *Ibid.*, 16.

[13] The parallel with R. M. Hare's "universal prescriptives" is obvious. Ramsey makes clear his differences with Hare in his "Moral Judgments and God's Commands" in *Christian Ethics and Contemporary Philosophy*, ed. I. T. Ramsey (London: SCM Press, 1966), especially pp. 159-71, where he claims that moral judgments arise as a response to a claim that a situation makes upon us.

[14] *Ibid.*, 16-17.

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Ramsey called "empirical fit." These two characteristics--an unlimited reference (rather than a limited one) and justification only by empirical fit (rather than confirmation of deductions *and* stability over a wide range of phenomena)--distinguished theological from scientific models.

Ramsey had two points to make. First, he argued against the 'scale model era' in both science and theology. He claimed that our theoretical constructs do not and cannot picture God or the universe. Just as understanding Faraday's lines of force (or the lines of latitude on a globe) as picturing real entities is preposterous, so understanding talk of God as picturing God is also absurd. The problems inherent in construing theology as picturing God can be illustrated by a quotation from A.J. Ayer:

> It is to be remarked that in cases where deities are identified with natural objects, assertions concerning them may be allowed to be significant. If, for example, a man tells me that the occurrence of thunder is alone both necessary and sufficient to establish the truth of the proposition that Jehovah is angry, I may conclude that, in his usage of words, the sentence, "Jehovah is angry" is equivalent to "It is thundering."[15]

For the devout or for the irreligious, the literal picture of God sitting on a cloud, hurling bolts of lightning, and clapping her hands thunderously to demonstrate anger is as far-fetched as Faraday's "elastic strings ...firmly glued at both ends to the surfaces of the two conductors."[16] In short, taking images, metaphors or models in any field as literal pictures yields confusion rather than clarification.

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[15] A. J. Ayer, *Language Truth and Logic*, Second Edition (London: Victor Gollantz, Ltd., 1946), 115. Any talk of a deity that is not identified with a natural object is construed by Ayer to be nonsense.

[16] Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, 19, quoting Pierre Duhem, *The Aim and Structure of Physical Theory*, as cited in Black, *op. cit.*, 234.

The second point supplements the first. Although Ramsey never sharply developed his epistemological position in his publications, he was clearly opposed to naive realism. Yet he also was not a pure instrumentalist: his models represented real events and intended to refer to actual occurrences. Ramsey certainly made important concessions to an instrumentalist position. This became clear in Ramsey's discussion of models in the psychological and social sciences. For instance, he labelled behaviorist psychological theories "useful." He wrote that "psychology may profitably work with behaviouristic models and may precisify itself further by using for example mathematical models, and probability theory."[17] These kinds of models have the status of disclosure models. They do not picture persons. Rather, they give one understanding of a person's behavior. The topic of psychological study is a person, and Ramsey claimed that a person "will never--logically never--be transparent to any or all models, still less covered completely by picturing models."[18] This discussion distinguished both the realist and instrumentalist components. Models are instruments used to understand whatever there is. The only ontological commitment is that there is something to be understood. The epistemological commitment is that "something" lies beyond complete understanding.

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[17] *Models and Mystery*, 44.

[18] *Ibid.*, 28-29. Cf. the argument for the systematic elusiveness of "I" in Chapter Two, *supra*, for the background of this claim, and the point of such models.

Ramsey claimed that just as a psychologist cannot fully explain or picture a person, neither can a sociologist fully explain or picture a society. This was the main point of a rather confusing discussion of the philosophy of the social sciences which he drew from the work of Peter Winch and Karl Popper. Ramsey criticized Winch for not criticizing Popper adequately and (specifically) for Winch's suggestion that "friendship" is incompatible with acting in accord with the policy of a public welfare agency in which someone is employed. Ramsey argued:

> For instance, the agency may have a policy which presumably will be expressed as a large-scale policy, in terms of models which have a scientific status. Friendship, on the other hand, is a model which defies prediction... My point is that circumstances might be so complex that they would best be gripped by not one model but two, and then both models despite their diversity, would be held together by the insight in which both are fulfilled.[19]

Neither model alone is necessarily sufficient to understand what is going on in a complex situation in which two friends, a social worker and a client, interact. The way in which a policy is carried out is as important as the policy itself for the efficiency of the agency and the satisfaction of the workers and the clients. Both sorts of models are useful.

A more precise form of the claim that models are instruments used to understand whatever there is to be understood involves the logical status of "I." Ramsey concluded that "we are peculiar enough to be ourselves and to possess a first-person subjectivity understood in, but never exhausted by, the diversity however diverse of that third person language in which all models, scientific or social, trade."[20] Persons are logic-

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[19] *Ibid.*, 40. [20] *Ibid.*, 44.

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ally and actually prior to any assertions made about them. Whatever is said about a person has the logical status of a model that presupposes the individual. The information these models contain represents a person or state of affairs, but no model can capture the elusive subjectivity of a person. Disclosure models, whether scientific or social, do not picture events, states of affairs or persons. Rather, they are intended to evoke understanding of events, states of affairs, or persons by their representations. Although some may be pictorial, disclosure models do not presuppose a picture-theory of meaning.

In a discussion three years after the publication of *Models and Mystery*, R. B. Braithwaite offered some criticisms of Ramsey's theory of models. He took the position that Ramsey's picturing models were like those currently used in the natural sciences, but that his disclosure models were no models at all. He put the point strongly and clearly.

> ...he seems to be abandoning the distinction between a theory and a model for it, and using the term "model" as a synonym for a schematic or partial or approximate theory, a theory put forward to cover only certain aspects of the phenomena in question. Economists and other social scientists frequently use "model" in this way. But if it is so used, it cannot also be used to contrast with the theory for which it is a model.[21]

Unfortunately Ramsey did not reply directly to this criticism. However, Braithwaite obviously minimized Ramsey's distinction between picturing and disclosure models. Rather than abandoning a distinction between theory and model, Ramsey distinguished different kinds of models on epistemological grounds and on logical grounds. The distinction made by Braith-

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[21] R. B. Braithwaite, "Models and Mystery" in *Theoria to Theory* I, 3 (April, 1967), 251. Other writers in the discussion were Jean Miller and Ted Bastin and there is a reply by Ian Ramsey.

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waite between physical science models and social science models is quite similar to Ramsey's distinction between picturing models and disclosure models. The difference is that Ramsey attributed the same status to scientific models as to models in the social sciences: both are partial or approximate understandings of what there is to be understood. Braithwaite's contrast between "model" and "theory" works only if "model" is stipulated to be identical to "picturing model." But there are further legitimate uses of "model" accentuated in Ramsey's work, but ruled out of court by Braithwaite. While Ramsey's distinctions were not laid out clearly and explicitly, Braithwaite's criticism that "no one core of meaning can be found running through the uses [by Ramsey] of 'model'" is not accurate.[22] In fact, both sorts of model identified by Ramsey are human constructs for understanding phenomena. Each sort has its own epistemological status and logical function. The presuppositions that undergird the picture model theory of the naive realist are adequate neither to support disclosure models nor to account for the phenomena that require multi-model explanation.[23] It is not, as Braithwaite contended, that Ramsey confused models and theories. Rather, he rejected a theory that had room only for picture models. Picture models had a proper place in Ramtheory, as Braithwaite noticed: they function to explain a theory. But their uses are very limited, primarily because deductions from them are hazardous.

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[22] *Ibid.*, 250-51.

[23] Cp. Ian Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1966), 171-74, 284-86.

The confusion in the discussion between Braithwaite and Ramsey is caused by varying attributions of the status of models. Max Black captured the difference:

> Certainly there is some similarity between the use of a model and the use of metaphor--perhaps we should say of a sustained and systematic metaphor. And the crucial question about the autonomy of the method of models is paralleled by an ancient dispute about the translatability of metaphors. Those who see a model as a mere crutch are like those who consider metaphor a mere decoration or ornament. But there are powerful and irreplaceable uses of metaphor not adequately described by the old formula of "saying one thing and meaning another."[24]

Black went on to note that much of what is said about the irreplaceable and powerful uses of metaphor can also be said of models. He concluded by writing, "Metaphorical thought is a distinctive mode of achieving insight, not to be construed as an ornamental substitute for plain thought."[25] Much the same can be said about models. Braithwaite's discussion of Ramsey simply ignored this important role of models. Ramsey's theory not only accounted for Braithwaite's position, but also illumined the other uses of models, for his theory can explain the ornamental and illustrative uses of models and metaphors as well as their evocative and representative functions. Ramsey's broader position, based on Black's work, accounted for more functions in a more clear and coherent way than did Braithwaite's narrower position.

The next question is, what has all this to do with theology? Ramsey dealt with the implications for theology of the distinction between picture models and disclosure models in *Models and Mystery*. The pivotal point of that discussion was expressed in Chapter Three: "It is my thesis, then, that by virtue of the models they variously incorporate or the metaphors which they employ, or the distinctions native to their exercise, *all disciplines* combine insight and discursive reasoning, mystery and understanding."[26] The discipline of theology is no exception to this. However, Ramsey claimed that the emphasis in theology was different. There the emphasis is on the insight disclosed, rather than on the discursive reasoning; on the mystery, rather than the understanding. This difference in emphasis does not invalidate the generalization applied to all disciplines. This can be illustrated by noting that the emphasis in therapeutic psychology is different from the emphasis in theoretical psychology, the former on the insight and the latter on the discursive reasoning. And it could be added that neither is complete without the input from studies of the community from sociology and related disciplines.

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[24] Max Black, "Models and Archetypes" in *Models and Metaphors*, 236.

[25] *Ibid.*, 237.

The theological emphasis on insight disclosed and on mystery is accentuated by the qualifiers that form part of most theological models. "Qualifiers" are words (or phrases or prefixes; often adverbs) that are directives to use the model until a characteristically different situation (a disclosure situation) is evoked.[27] They are prescriptive rather than descriptive, intended to accentuate the different logical status of the words that are contextualized by the models, and to prevent the models from being taken as picture models.

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[26] *Models and Mystery*, 56; emphasis added. This point underlies the earlier discussions of models in *Religion and Science: Conflict and Synthesis* (London: S.P.C.K., 1964) and in *Religious Language*.

[27] Cp., *e.g.*, *Religious Language*, 70.

As noted earlier, the criterion for judging the adequacy or appropriateness of theological models is not direct verification or falsification, but rather the looser criterion of "empirical fit." Justifiable theological models are qualified models (although sometimes the qualification occurs in a more haphazard fashion than simply affixing "qualifiers" to disclosure models). Qualified models are a species of disclosure models; they are distinguished from other disclosure models in that they are qualified to accentuate the insight; they are judged, as are some personal models, by the criterion (or set of criteria) of "empirical fit"; and they are grounded in a cosmic disclosure situation.

Ramsey used and discovered numerous qualifiers to generate his theological models. Most, if not all, of them were derived from traditional Christian language about God. Donald Evans organized Ramsey's qualifiers into three sets. The first is the set of universalizing qualifiers. This type of qualifier, such as the prefixes all- and omni-, functioned differently from such words as "very" or "extremely." Evans noted that these qualifiers function "as a directive, a prescription, to extend the range of observables in space and time so that the descriptive term has all-inclusive scope and hence a new meaning."[28] The second set was not differentiated from the first by Ramsey. These are what Evans called "perfecting" qualifiers. Typically, Ramsey used the term "infinitely" when discussing this kind of qualifier, for example, "God is infinitely loving." The difference between these two (complementary) types of qualifiers is the former expands the range while the latter is used "to generate a series which focuses, not on the *range* of love, but on its *quality* or *intensity* or relative perfection."[29] The third type of qualifier was differentiated from the foregoing by Ramsey himself. These are the negating qualifiers, such as the prefixes im- or in- attached to a model, such as "mutable" or "passible." Evans described their use concisely:

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[28] D. D. Evans, "Ian Ramsey on Talk About God," 218.

> We are directed to start with the models, fixing on mutable or passible features of perceptual situations, and then to apply the qualifier "not", progressively obliterating these features. The words "immutable" and "impassible" are not descriptions of God; rather, they are designed "to give a kind of technique for meditation", so as to "bring about that discernment which is the basis for talking about God." Ramsey says that their main merit is "evocative".[30]

Some qualifiers work as both negating and universalizing, depending on how they are used. "Eternal" and "necessary" can be construed both as "including all time" and "presupposition of everything," or as "non-temporal" and "non-contingent."[31]

Besides these three types of qualifiers another way that models can be qualified is by other models. Evans explained this mode of qualification, as follows:

> If, for example, God is 'my loving father,' 'my shepherd', 'my potter' and 'my strong tower', then *none* of these descriptions

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[29] *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

[30] *Ibid.*, 221. Evans refers to *Religious Language* (p. 53 in the SCM edition, p. 60 in the Macmillan paperback edition).

[31] Cp. Evans, 222-23.

> can apply to him with their ordinary meanings. The application of each restricts what inferences can be legitimately made by the others, so the meaning of each is shifted. If we add a few hundred more descriptive expressions, using the widest possible range of models, the mutual qualification will be very great... the effect on meaning will be rather similar to that produced by a universalising qualifier. Any description associated with a disclosure of God in one situation will be modified by descriptions of disclosures of God in *all* other situations. Thus Ramsey argues that conflicts between models are not a difficulty or defect in religious language, but an intrinsic feature, another way of indicating divine transcendence.[32]

This type of qualification does something slightly different. The mutual qualification of models by other models is what Ramsey called "multi-model discourse." In his discussion of the various doctrines of the atonement, for instance, he was able to suggest some pathways through that tangled jungle. His basic insight was as follows:

> Doctrines of the Atonement thus exist to point us to a cosmic disclosure about the Cross, and to give us hints for reliable talking about what is disclosed. They must never be supposed to be official reports describing with polished precision the preliminaries, the details, and the benefits of some major transaction in the cosmic market. Doctrines of the Atonement will always have the built-in hazards which surround metaphors and models.[33]

His discussion showed persuasively that one of the main reasons for interminable doctrinal controversy was that the metaphors and models were considered to be reports. The real problem was that there were numerous models based in one disclosure and that the language based on these models became tangled. Ramsey's discussion of the atonement showed the problems that can arise in multi-model discourse. However, if the metaphors and models are kept straight, Ramsey contended that multi-model discourse can serve a purpose:

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[32] *Ibid.*, 223-24.

[33] *Christian Discourse*, 55.

> But mystery may now be safeguarded, not this time by incorporating a qualifier as a word, though that might be possible, but more usually as in the Psalms and Hymns, by qualifying with other models in the single discourse. Mystery is now safeguarded by recognizing that to talk adequately of the God who is disclosed on any occasion will need language culled from and growing out of all the models which arise in all the vast variety of circumstances in which God has been disclosed... This is a rather more rough and ready way of qualifying: by the jostling of models. Here is another less orderly, and more haphazard way of being articulate about a mystery. But it emphasizes from another direction the need to balance one model against another and to be literate only with the greatest circumspection.[34]

This third method of qualification highlights a point that can be slurred over if only the first two types of qualifiers are considered, a point I shall discuss below.

In *Religious Language* Ramsey claimed that qualifiers are prescriptives that emphasize the mystery, and preserve the insight, while also making a linguistic point. The linguistic point is that "God," or any other key-word, final option word, or apex word, has a position different from straightforward language. Yet this word is not separated completely from ordinary assertion. Ramsey claimed that by the use of qualified models, this special position "can nevertheless be reached from ordinary language, to which words like "'love' belong, once this ordinary language has been appropriately qualified."[35] Yet how would one reach this posi-

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[34] "On Understanding Mystery" in *The Chicago Theological Seminary Register* LIII, No. 5 (May, 1963), 10. Another illustration of the method of qualification by jostling is provided in "Talking About God: Models, Ancient and Modern."

[35] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 102.

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tion? One way to do it would be the following:

> Consider the sequence:
>
> Billy loved his sister enough to give her his lollipop. (a bit of love)
> John loved Jean enough to donate his kidney to her. (a lot of love)
> George loved Martha enough to give her his entire life. (an extended love)
> Dag loved enough to serve humanity all his life. (even more love)
> : : : : : : : : :
> Yet God so loved the whole world that he gave his only-begotten son.[36] (an infinite or cosmic love)

The model (love) is developed in the first four examples. In each succeeding example we can discern an increase in the intensity and duration of love. But the fifth example is not the last in a series of increments. Rather than intending it as such, qualifying the model by 'infinite' suggests that the last is different, something that can only be pointed to, and not captured adequately by any language. In this case the point is "to continue long enough with the sequence to evoke a situation characteristically different from the terms which preceded it."[37] It is like attempting to talk of circles in polygon language. Ramsey noted that an infinitely-sided polygon is no polygon at all, and suggested that the qualifier "infinite" directs one not to be content, but to keep drawing polygons with one more side until the light dawned and we 'saw' something not adequately representable in polygon language. The word 'circle,' Ramsey wrote, "is nothing if not logically odd from the standpoint of polygon language. The parallel with the theological case is plain."[38]

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[36] Cp. John 3:16.

[37] *Ibid.*, 77.

This brings us to the point where numerous authors have raised, in different ways, a crucial question.[39] Is there any connection between "evil" and "infinitely evil," between "loving" and "infinitely loving," between "good" and infinitely good"? Doesn't the qualification of these models abrogate any connection between the straightforward and the logically odd? Doesn't the qualification make the model, when applied to God, empty talk? Ramsey was not unaware of this problem. In his unpublished monograph, "The Problem of Evil," he highlighted it:

> It is perfectly true that "Tom is *exceedingly* good" entails "Tom is good"... But to say "God is *infinitely* good" or "God is creator *ex nihilo* of good" does not entail "God is good". To say that "God is infinitely evil" (where infinitely is used in a technical and not a popular sense), "God is *beyond* evil" or "God is creator *ex nihilo* of evil" does not entail "God is evil". The qualifiers *infinite*, *ex nihilo*, *beyond*, establish the logical difference...there is no easy, straight prediction of either good or evil of God.[40]

However, Ramsey did not say what predication there might be--he did not explicitly solve the problem. Yet, using strands from his thought, I hope to show in Chapter Eight just how this problem can be solved when one considers (1) the function of multi-model discourse, (2) the notion of empirical fit, and (3) the difference between the validity and the efficacy of models.

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[38] *Ibid.*, 78. Also see, "Talking About God: Models Ancient and Modern," where the example is slightly improved.

[39] Cf. the articles by Cohen and Harris cited at the beginning of this chapter and McClendon and Smith, *Understanding Religions Convictions*, Chapter Two.

[40] Ramsey, "The Problem of Evil," unpublished manuscript (1972), 25.

The problem of the connection between a model and a qualified model derived from it underlines also the importance of "tentativity" in Ramsey's thought. All qualified models--and, for that matter, all disclosure models--are to be held tentatively. He noted an implication of this: "...*models* of God *can* be and always are being *taken* away, criticized, graded, and ordered, and we are committed in this way to an endless explication of what cosmic disclosure reveals."[41] Models are inherently corrigible. This especially applied to qualified models. As he put it, "...the only thing of which we can be sure is that we shall never be *absolutely* right, for God is 'God and not man' with a mystery and transcendence that will *never* be transparently clear."[42] Qualified models are guides for talking, not fundamental principles or axioms, so "we should expect articulation from any model to generate inconsistency somewhere."[43] When this inconsistency arises, it is an indication that the model may have been understood too literally or was not suitably qualified. The tentative status of models implies that contradictory deductions from different qualified models are not altogether damaging to the models, but rather these deductions may show that a model is being used inappropriately.[44]

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[41] Ramsey, *Christian Discourse: Some Logical Explorations*, 89.

[42] *Ibid.*, 26. Emphasis added.

[43] *Ibid.*, 44.

[44] Cf. Chapter Six, below, for Ramsey's discussion of this.

In retrospect this discussion shows that Ramsey considered qualified models to be a species of disclosure models, models which (a) incorporate a structural similarity between the phenomena and the model for it, while denying picturing and (b) arise in moments of disclosure. Theological models differ from other disclosure models in that they (a) arise in situations of a cosmic character; (b) are judged in terms of empirical fit rather than in terms of verifiable deductions; and (c) are qualified to emphasize the mystery and transcendence of that which is disclosed in the cosmic disclosure situation. Qualified models are "acceptable, persuasive, clear and so reliable guides to what at the present baffles us."[45] Provisionally, I conclude that this part of Ramsey's theory of religious language encounters no insurmountable theoretical problems.

II. WHAT QUALIFIED MODELS DO

The previous section discussed the status of qualified models. They were seen to be a kind of disclosure model, but "with a twist"--they incorporated a qualifier so as to preserve the mystery and transcendence of what is modelled. But, as noted above, they also have many of the functions of other sorts of disclosure models. Primarily, qualified models were seen as referring to and also representing (though not picturing or describing) God. Calling what the qualified models claim to represent "God" seems, at first glance, to be a case of *petitio principi*. However, that is not the case. Ramsey was quite specific about claiming that the term "God" had no meaning without some sort of contextual setting. When, as here, "God" is used to refer to the reference of a cosmic disclosure, Ramsey claimed that it usually functions neither as a logically proper name nor as a descriptive, predicable term. Rather, it has some properties of both.[46] Ramsey made this point clearly in his unpublished essay, "Fact, Metaphysics and God," where he construed the use of "God" as a grammatical (not logical) proper name. He wrote:

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[45] Ramsey, *On Being Sure in Religion*, 18.

> We also see how "God" is both like (and unlike) a proper name. Proper names are the best public equivalents that we can either get or give for "I", and in the case of "I" a proper name can in certain circumstances become almost an exact logical synonym for "I"--though there is always the risk of its being taken as a definite description. But insofar as a proper name could be in certain circumstances an exact logical equivalent for "I", *to this extent* we may regard "God" as a proper name...[47]

This circumstance--the "uncontextualized" use of the term "God"--is the occasion for construing "God" as a logical proper name. In most circumstances, "God," like a grammatical proper name, not only refers to the person or entity named, but also is "contextualized" by carrying some representational value. Until it is contextualized, "God" only refers to the "other" encountered in a situation of cosmic disclosure; it simply means 'that.' "God" becomes representative only through the use of qualified models. Two important points appear in this discussion. First, qualified models "contextualize" the term "God" through their representative function. Second, since "God" refers to the given "other," Ramsey could reasonably claim that not only was the reference of talk of God disclosure-given, but also that the representative value of such talk is tentative. The former is due to the logical-proper-name-aspect of "God," and the latter due to the facts that qualified models are (a) to be held tentatively (as are all disclosure models) and (b) function representatively to contextualize that of which they speak.

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[46] Cp. Ramsey, *Christian Discourse*, 82-83. "God" is a 'notion' in Ramsey's understanding of Berkeley's use of that term as distinguished from both 'ideas' (sensations) and 'abstract ideas' (which refer to nothing). Ramsey's one-time student, Michael Durrant, has concluded that the logic of "God" in Christian usage is not only manifold but inconsistent (*The Logical Status of God* [London: Macmillan, 1973], x-xi) and that its varying status are incompatible. Working from the standpoint of formal logic, Durrant was unable to discover a 'logic' for the uses of God. Rather than being persuasive, his book leaves the impression that his philosophy is not subtle enough to account for "God."

[47] Ramsey, "Fact, Metaphysics and God," B 65/178c. Also cf. 1/29/31ff and *Religious Language*, 21-22, 162, where he makes a similar point about nicknames.

It should be noted that in *Religious Language* "God" had the logical status of a key-word. Key-words were defined as ultimates of explanation expressive of the commitment of the speaker. Differing key-words expressed differing commitments and discernments on the part of the respective speakers.[48] There are other key-words besides "God." "Matter," "force," "energy," "duty," "love," "activity," "creativity," and others could be cited. In terms of reference, each of these is identical to "God" for each refers to the encountered "other." In terms of representation, however, each is contextualized and commended by differing qualified models--each acquired meaning in a context. Although the same could be said of other key-words, Ramsey claimed, "Without some contextual setting, the word 'God' plainly means nothing..."[49] Part of the "context" is the situation of cosmic disclosure. But in order to say anything about what the disclosure discloses, one must resort to models. In other words, key-words--including "God"--are uninformative until they are given representational value through the use of qualified models. The representational and referential functions of qualified models enable one to speak of what the disclosure discloses and thus to express an ultimate claim.[50]

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[48] Cf. *Religious Language*, 44, 53.

Qualified models have other functions beyond representing and referring. In fact, their most discussed function is evocation of disclosures. Although numerous commentators have emphasized this function of qualified models, they have tended to ignore the representative and referential functions. If there is any rational justification for talk of God, it is ncecssary that it be talk of something, that it refer and represent. To ignore this condition is to misrepresent Ramsey's thought and ascribe an unwarranted irrationalist stance to Ramsey's work.[51] Ramsey's avowed intention to stake a claim for the faith dimension involved that it be a reasonable claim, as his concern with the "empirical anchorage" of religious language shows. He had no interest in staking a 'non-cognitive' claim. The misunderstandings of Ramsey's intentions and of his position are partly due to his own work, however, for he had emphasized the evocative role of his qualified models.

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[49] *Christian Discourse*, 82.

[50] Further discussion of key-words will be undertaken in part III of this chapter.

[51] Most notably this was done by Paul van Buren in *The Secular Meaning of the Gospel* (New York: Macmillan, 1963) and by C. B. Cohen in "The Logic of Religious Language" in *Religious Studies* IX (1971).

In terms of some negating qualifiers, Ramsey's discussion of his recipe for combining intelligibility and mystery took the following form:

> So when we talk of God as "immutable," or as "impassible," the function of these particular attribute-words is primarily to evoke the kind of situation we have just been mentioning; to fix on mutable and passible features of perceptual situations and to develop these features in such a way that there is evoked a characteristically different situation which is the foundation *in fact* for assertions about God's immutability or impassibility. But there is more to it than that. For these words "immutability" and "impassibility" also make a *language* plea. They claim for the word "God" a position outside all mutable and passible language.[52]

The kind of situation to be evoked is a disclosure situation, one in which the "light dawns" or "the ice breaks." The attribute-words themselves act as "mnemonics"[53] to guide the speaker in the right direction in his talking.

In terms of the perfecting qualifiers, the sequence can be illustrated by the example given in the first part of this chapter. Ramsey discussed their function as follows in his discussion of "infinitely good":

> The first logical function of the word "infinite" is to stimulate us to develop these "stories of good lives" in the right direction. But in tracing such a sequence there is no intention of arriving at "God" as a last term; the intention is to continue long enough with the sequence to evoke a situation characteristically different from the terms which preceded it; until we have evoked a situation not just characterized by goodness which we admire or feel stirred to follow, but a situation in relation to which we are prepared to yield everything, "Soul, life and all."[54]

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[52] *Religious Language*, 59-60. [53] *Freedom and Imortality*, 47.

[54] *Religious Language*, 77.

The second logical function noted by Ramsey parallels the language plea in the previous example, for it "points to something outside 'good' language altogether."[55]

The method of qualification by jostling preserves the status of "God" as beyond any single domain of language, as does the single-word qualification. However, Ramsey did not discuss the evocative function of models qualified by jostling. The haphazard piling up of models could be evocative of a cosmic disclosure, for instance, were they used in a liturgical litany or chant. What this method emphasizes is that no single way of talking of God will be adequate. Each model used qualifies and is qualified by every other model. Rather than attempting to make a coherent and simple theory out of the various models of atonement, for instance, the point that qualification by jostling emphasized was that each of the ways of talking offers various roads leading to a cosmic disclosure. This type of qualification also displays the inappropriateness of some theories elaborated to reconcile various Christian doctrines. Complete and perfect order will never be achieved, for models are neither pictures nor theories. This type of qualification shows that not only will any single qualified model be inadequate to picture God, but also that not even all qualified models will picture God any more than all the models of me will picture "I." Just as I am not captured by the models constructed to talk about me, so God is not captured by models constructed to talk about the "Other," As talk of my activity becomes more understandable through the use of various models, so can talk of God's activity become more understandable by using models. In neither case, however, is it to be assumed that such talk will picture a person or God completely, nor that any single model will suffice. As various models for my activity (husband, father, teacher, writer, etc.) are needed, so will various models be needed for God.

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[55] *Ibid.*

To recapitulate, qualified models function to refer to and represent God. They also function to evoke situations of cosmic disclosure and to remind one of the fact that "God" cannot be part of straightforward language. But there is another problem: qualified models don't always work to evoke a cosmic disclosure situation. Does this count against Ramsey's theory?

In their discussion of Ramsey's theory of religious language,[56] McClendon and Smith have observed that Ramsey noted that models may not work:

> There is no one story in the chain of disclosure-stories which guarantees success; if the hearer doesn't get it the only recourse left to the speaker is to tell other stories, until, if at all, such a disclosure point is reached for the listener. If, however, this seems to make religious language too subjective, we can remember that Wittgenstein made some similar remarks about 'getting' ostensive definitions, and Lewis Carroll some very clever ones about 'getting' logical inferences. But if there is no flat guarantee that a given person will follow a logical inference or understand an ostensive definition, we may not be too disturbed that on Ramsey's view religious language provides no flat guarantee that the hearer will experience discernment in connection with a given disclosure story. Religious language runs the risk of failure, but perhaps no more than does all language.[57]

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[56] Cf. *Understanding Religious Convictions*, Chapter Two.

[57] *Ibid.*, 41. McClendon and Smith refer to Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations* (New York: Macmillan, 1955) #28, 13e, and to Carroll,

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Going beyond McClendon's and Smith's critique, it seems that even those models that consistently fail to evoke a disclosure can be accounted for on Ramsey's theory, in terms of the efficacy or inefficacy of models. This is part of the problem of preference, which is discussed in Chapter Eight. But the fact that some formally valid models fail to work at any time, or fail to work for some hearers, does not present any real problem for Ramsey's theory.

The above discussion of the efficacy of evocation in terms of stories (rather than models) raises the question of the relation of religious stories to models. Some qualified models (*e.g.*, First Cause) may function as evocative of disclosures without stories. One can trace causes back until "a characteristically different situation is evoked: a situation which in Bradley's phrase 'satisfies'; when the light dawns, the penny drops, the ice breaks."[58] While Ramsey talked of "causal stories," these 'stories' seem to be rather different from those that the Christian tells of the mighty acts of God. Talk of 'stories' in this quasi-scientific discussion of causes seems inappropriate. It seems, rather, that one might speak of a 'chain of causes,' contemplating each link, until the very fact that the 'chain' exists struck one. This recalls Wittgenstein's famous, "It is not *how* things are in the world that is mystical,

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"What the Tortoise Said to Achilles" in *Mind* N.S. IV, No. 14 (April, 1895), 278-80, reprinted in I. M. Copi and J. A. Gould, *Readings on Logic* (New York: Macmillan, 1964).

[58] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 70.

but *that* it exists."[59] The movement from the 'how' to the 'that' is the distance from talk of "causes" to talk of "First Cause."

In a more common usage of "story," *i.e.*, a narrative, it is justifiable to say that the models themselves can act as "mnemonics, generate stories...whose point and hope is to evoke disclosure situations..."[60] This function of models is slightly different from the previous. Models can be used to generate stories which in turn hope to evoke cosmic disclosures,[61] rather than evoking disclosures more directly. Indeed, this latter process would seem to be more common. Stories deriving from the model of "shepherd" could be used to recreate the 'point' of Psalm 22, Ezekiel 34 or John 10. "Shepherd" here is a model from which discourse can be derived. But not all discourse derived from this and other models is appropriate. As Ramsey put it:

> Models like father, shepherd, physician, King may be much more fertile than builder or tradesman, but even discourse about fathers, shepherds, physicians and Kings must sooner or later be incongruous. No one is so captivated by the physician model that he is emboldened to ask whether God will benefit from the new deal to be given to consultants by the Ministry of Health. Some models may take us a long way in theological talking, but eventually even they must grind to a halt.[62]

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[59] L. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trs. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuiness (New York: Humanities Press; London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), #6.44.

[60] Ramsey, *Freedom and Immortality*, 47.

[61] It is this aspect that Ted Bastin was criticizing when he wrote that *Models and Mystery* "can be summarized as an apologia for, and an explanation of the activity of generating sermon talk...[and] reads like a textbook on rhetoric..." "Models and Mystery" in *Theoria to Theory* I, 3 (April, 1967), 259.

[62] Ramsey, "Talking About God: Models, Ancient and Modern," 84.

In another place he put a similar point in a way to emphasize the importance of multi-model discourse as well as the fact that models pushed too far are useless: "It has been the heretics who...have run models to death, or restricted discourse to a few models or a single model towards which they have had an inordinate affection."[63] Whether or not that is what heretics did and do, it is important to note that the kinds of stories one can tell, based on a given model, are limited by other models.

In addition to generating stories, models function to license discourse. But because theology is multiple and not linear, each license is limited; exceeding the limits of one's license can only yield confusion and perplexities or nonsense questions (as the one about God and the Ministry of Health). Or, to change the metaphor, theology is a many-stranded rope. In his last lecture, Ramsey put it this way:

> Theology trades in models and metaphors each of which occurs within, and arises from a particular disclosure situation, and each of which licenses discourse by which we can be articulate about what the disclosure discloses. So theology becomes a complex interweaving of different strands of discourse, each proceeding from different models, and each at different points and in different ways being qualified so as to indicate their disclosure basis. For all the strands are attempting to be articulate in one way or another about a vision.[64]

The problem, on Ramsey's terms, was that oftentimes Christian theolgians were not sure to which strand their talk belonged. One might say that they tangled strands.

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[63] "Models and Mystery: Reply" in *Theoria to Theory* I, 3 (April, 1967), 267. The problem of inappropriate mixing of discourse from differing models is exemplified in the discussion of the atonement in *Christian Discourse*, Chapter Two.

[64] "The Crisis of Faith" (mimeographed lexture text September 12, 1972, Church Leaders' Conference, Selly Oak Colleges, Birmingham), 15.

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The way to avoid tangling strands--or engaging in unlicensed discourse--is not entirely clear. Some rules to guide this sort of talk are needed. In the next chapter we will see what sorts of rules can serve this function and how the language that is dependent upon ultimate claims, which I shall call derivative religious language, is to be justified.

In summary, the functions of qualified models fall into five groups. First, they *refer* to the "Other" encountered in a situation of cosmic disclosure. Second, they *represent* the "Other" through the use of models drawn from everyday discourse. Third, they *indicate the status* of "God" outside of (but related to) everyday discourse by the use of qualifiers, and *contextualize* "God" by the representative force. Fourth, they function to *evoke* disclosures. Fifth, they *generate stories* to evoke disclosures and *license discourse* drawn from the models.

The problems involved in each of these functions have also been discussed. In terms of the first function (referring), no insurmountable problems arose. In terms of the representative function, the problem of the relation between the model (*e.g.*, good) and the qualified model (infinitely good) is not explicitly solved in Ramsey's writings. The problem of rational preference in models is part of this problem, too. Discussion of these problems will be taken up in Chapter Eight. In terms of the status-indication and contextualization of key-words, the problems of preference and predication (the relation between model and qualified model) arises again. In terms of the fourth function of qualified models, that of evoking cosmic disclosures (whether directly or through generated

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stories), the fact that cosmic disclosure situations are not always (or perhaps even often) evoked does not count decisively against the theory.

Finally, in terms of licensing discourse and generating stories, the problems which occur will be discussed in the next chapter on the derivative sorts of religious language. However, according to *Religious Language*, talk of the infinite or unlimited is not limited to qualified models. There are also what Ramsey called "key words." To conclude the discussion of primary religious language, we will examine the notion of key words and the relation of key words to qualified models.

III. KEY WORDS

In *Religious Language* Ramsey called key words "irreducible posits," "ultimates of explanation" and "final options."[65] They are commended by tautologies and declare the speaker's commitment. He compared the place of key words in religious language with the axioms of a mathematical system which "express in tautologies, in necessary propositions, the loyalty, the option of the mathematician as he posits the particular conventions."[66] Key words in religion differ from the axioms of a mathematical system in that the commitment the former expresses combines the universal range of of mathematical commitment (or the applicability anywhere of mathematics) with the depth of personal commitment.[67] Key words were also said to refer to that which is encountered in the cosmic disclosure situation. Differing key words highlight differing commitments and discernments. But they all have the same reference, for "...if a cosmic disclosure is genuinely 'cosmic' why should we suppose that it has more than one objective reference *in toto*?"[68] For a Christian, "God" is *the* key word.

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[65] Cf. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 44, 47, 50, 53. I have said that they express "ultimate claims," a category that includes all of these three.

[66] *Ibid.*, 50.

Other key words besides "God" are identified in *Religious Language*. "Duty," "love," "conscience" are some of them. In other places Ramsey included Bradley's "Absolute" and Berkeley's "activity" in the class of key words. But the differing key words, displaying differing commitments and discernments, arising from situations with the same reference, highlight an important presupposition that remained constant in Ramsey's thought. Two quotations, written some thirty-three years apart, show the presupposition and its continuing importance:

> I do not think we can too often realize that, between (1) the occurrence of an experience E, and (2) the occurrence of a symbolic description of E (e.g., a description of E in words), there is no *necessary* connexion in virtue of which the latter assumes a peculiar kind of "infallibility."[69]

> When a disclosure has occurred, we...cannot be mistaken about that "something" which is other than ourselves. But we can certainly be mistaken about the articulation of this which

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[67] *Ibid.*, 41.

[68] Ramsey, letter to D. D. Evans, 16 November, 1970, 5.

[69] I. T. Ramsey, "Revelation: An Essay for Mr. Boys Smith" (handwritten, dated 25.ii.39, four pages), 1. This essay, discovered among Ramsey's papers in Auckland Castle, is six pages long in the copy I typed, single spaced.

> is objectively given. Indeed, I have been at pains to point out that there are not guaranteed articulations.[70]

The presupposition that the facts don't guarantee what one says about them (and vice-versa) surfaced explicitly in Ramsey's distinction between being sure in religion, but tentative in theology. One can be sure that one has encountered something, yet the language (whether "models," "key words" or other sorts of language) one uses to represent and refer to that encounter is always corrigible.

This notion of "key words" had a curious history in Ramsey's thought that only becomes apparent in examining his writings chronologically. Their first appearance is in *Miracles: An Exercise in Logical Mapwork* (written in 1951). They occurred there as words that logically complete and supplement the various language maps or areas of language, such as history, geography, science, economics, etc. They are called "metaphysical words," pictured as words "marginal" to the language maps, and function as "co-ordinating, boundary or index words, uniting all the several languages, each of which has its own particular logic."[71] Some of the examples given are "I," "God," and Bradley's "Absolute." In "Theology and Language: Some Illustrative Examples" (1953?) they are the 'lift' words, that is, words that provide transportation between the various, otherwise disconnected, levels in the department store of knowledge. In this essay Ramsey suggested that the "whole logical problem of theological language is to elucidate the index words, and above all, the apex word 'God', by means of the different levels."[72] As discussed above, key words were called "irreducible posits," "ultimates of explanation," and "final options" in *Religious Language* (1955). In *Freedom and Immortality* (1957) "God" was called a key word and "the one ultimate category." He also used the term "key phrase," although that term is indexed under "key words."[73] In "On the Possibility and Purpose of a Metaphysical Theology" (1959) some distinctions were made among key words. Metaphysics was there viewed as an anciliary language scheme, as physics and logic are also ancillary to common-sense language. Metaphysical key words such as Whitehead's "Process" and Berkeley's "activity" can be suggested by science. However, Ramsey claims that this is not sufficient:

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[70] Ramsey, "Facts and Disclosures" (1972) in *Christian Empiricism*, 174. The 'something' alludes to Locke's "Something, I know not what," discussed earlier in Ramsey's paper.

[71] Ramsey, *Miracles*, 15.

> But if these concepts have no other grounding, and no other anchorage than in scientific phenomena, they will provide us with but pseudo-metaphysics; they will be at best useful jingles which, mnemonic-like, associate diverse scientific languages. They will at best have the curiously uncertain status of Kant's Regulative Ideas.[74]

However, even these key words can attain the status of metaphysical integrator words, if they also are grounded in "what is more than spatio-temporal."[75] The metaphysical integrator words that Ramsey suggests will be the most adequate are "I" and "God." Metaphysics was considered an overall ancillary language map, constructed in accordance with "a vision of the unseen,"[76] providing words to integrate the various areas of discourse. Ramsey's reason for preferring "I" and "God" to other integrator words was that he believed that "there cannot be a justifiable sub-personal metaphysics. But that is not to say that a metaphysics which was no more than personally structured would be adequate."[77] In this essay he has made clear what he thinks the necessary and sufficient conditions for metaphysical speculation are, and made distinctions among various key words, grading them in terms not only of their range, but also of their depth. Having suggested the logical status and functions of key words in metaphysics and theology, he then abandoned the notion.

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[72] Ramsey, "Theology and Language," 5. For the dating of this unpublished essay, see Chapter Four, p. 100 above.

[73] Ramsey, *Freedom and Immortality*, 17, 49, 55.

[74] Ramsey, "On the Possibility and Purpose of a Metaphysical Theology," 162.

Ramsey never used the term in anything he wrote after 1960, except to refer to an occurrence in an earlier writing. The terms "key words," "integrator words," "metaphysical words," "apex word," "index words" simply disappeared. Words earlier identified as integrator words continued to occur: "I" and "God" occupied an important place in his subsequent work; the notion of "activity" (taken from Berkeley) received much discussion as well. But the category of "key words" was abandoned. While it might be hypothesized that Ramsey gave up the attempt to construct a metaphysics, or that he began to see the difference between metaphysics and primary theological language, such speculation is not necessary.

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[75] *Ibid.* [76] *Ibid.*, 163. [77] *Ibid.*, 177.

Sufficient reasons were given in his published works. His reply to H. D. Lewis's review of *Freedom and Immortality*, written in 1961, showed the reason:

> But I think that Professor Lewis's basic difficulty about my position is that he believes that I do not make the objects disclosed in cosmic disclosure situations certain enough, so let me emphasize that I do not appeal to situations so as to avoid questions of ontology and that the situations to which I appeal are certainly *not* finite, *for in every disclosure the object can eventually bear the name "God"*.[78]

The category of the ultimate contains only one member: God. But, since no articulations are guaranteed, that member can carry various representations. What previously were called key words became construed as abbreviated models or as metaphors, excepting "God." With this background the perplexing and apparently unsubstantiated claim from *Christian Discourse* (1963) becomes clear:

> Without some contextual setting, the word "God" plainly means nothing; on the other hand, if the word "God" had a completely adequate contextual setting it would be the name whose reference was the whole universe, and it is this, I believe, which justifies us meanwhile in claiming that the reference of any and every cosmic disclosure is the same, viz. God.[79]

All meaningful talk of God was thus construed by Ramsey as a model. If that talk is of "the everlasting God," for instance, "God" may be functioning in two ways there. First, it refers to the "other" encountered in a cosmic disclosure situation. Second, it may model that "other" as a god,

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[78] Ramsey, "Some Further Reflections on *Freedom and Immortality*" in *Hibbert Journal* LIX (July, 1961); reprinted (with Lewis's review from the January number of the same volume) in *Christian Empiricism*. Quotation cited from the latter, p. 228. Emphasis added, excepting "not" which was italicized in the original.

[79] Ramsey, *Christian Discourse*, 82.

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i.e., worthy of worship, etc. To discover whether one word was functioning two ways in any instance would require a more adequate characterization of the use. But such dual function was possible.

There may have been a 'religious' reason for distinguishing the status of "God" from the other sorts of "metaphysical words." He evidently became dissatisfied with ascribing the same logical status to "God" and those words which are in the category of "Kant's Regulative Ideas." The clearest confession of this position occurred in the context of his discussion of the differences between "notions," "abstract ideas," and "ideas" in Berkeley:

> The minute philosophers, the "men of strong heads," and minimizers with a vengeance, had forsaken an actively encountered God--a living God--and instead had taken hold of static ideas --stone cisterns of their own making, but broken and partial, and quite unable to hold the (living and active) water it was their intention to contain.[80]

Although Ramsey was referring to *Alciphron*, this quotation tells us as much about Ramsey's position as Berkeley's. Both Ramsey's conception of experience as "I r O" in which both "I" and "O" are active, and his position that the disclosure "breaks in" on one, exhibit the conviction that God is active.

Ramsey's reasons for and defence of his ascription of activity to God, taken up in his essay "A Personal God," were discussed in Chapter Three. Basically following Berkeley, Ramsey claimed that we see God as we see persons and talk of each only in terms of models. In regard to

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[80] Ramsey, "Berkeley and the Possibility of an Empirical Metaphysics," 24.

Berkeley, he put it this way:

> Notional awareness of spirits and God is characterized by ideas, but not adequately...the reason that God is not discerned is that familiarity breeds, if not contempt, at least blindness. Too often we look on glass, and look no further. What Berkeley hopes to do is to provide currency for us to "copy the heavens," to see God through it.[81]

This is, of course, argument by analogy. Ramsey (and Berkeley) pointed out the difference between knowing about a person and knowing a person. Knowing someone entails that you know something about him or her; but knowing about someone alone does not put in a position to make the claim "I know him/her." It is possible to know many facts about someone, and yet not be willing to claim "I know him." The former is, on Berkeley's terms, awareness of ideas; the latter is notional awareness.

In terms of God, there is a parallel claim. One can know many facts about the cosmos (or, understand a great deal of the "divine visual language"), without making the claim, or being in the position to make the claim "I know God." Or one can be mistaken about God because one's idea(s) of or model(s) for God are inadequate. But this is not unlike the claim to know in some ways someone, but then to have to say, in different circumstances, "Well, I guess I didn't really know him." A teacher can be surprised by a student: "Well, I knew he was a good and conscientious scholar; but I never would have guessed that he played the ukelele so well or that he made such good wine: I really didn't know him." The teacher had held one model as adequate to capture the student; but this was not adequate. It is not that the model was wrong--the student may have indeed been a very good student; it is rather that one's vision was limited. Of course, it may be that all we know is facts or that all there is to know can be captured in terms of models. But if there is something more to knowing a person than knowing about him or her in terms of facts of models, it is plausible that the same can be said of God.

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[81] *Ibid.*

Another way to approach this would be to examine the kinds of answers given to the question "Who (or what) is your god?" One answer could be "I have no God--I am an atheist." If this is understood as "I do not believe in a personal God--I am not a theist," then the question can be asked, "What do you believe in?" Assuming that an answer is given, "I believe in *A*,"[82] the original questioner could offer a metaphor: "Then your god is *A*." But, on Ramsey's terms, metaphors work like models. Hence, any explanation that can be given of who or what one's "god" is, what one's basic discernment and ultimate commitment are, will be understandable in terms of models, and subject to the criteria and evaluations that all models are. However the respondent came to hold *A* as his "god" will *ipso facto* meet the criteria Ramsey has set up for a cosmic disclosure situation, although the insight may well be of the "slowly dawning" type rather than the "immediately overwhelming" kind.

This illustrates that *Ramsey's "key words" were metaphors or models*. The answers given may be in terms of "key words," but they work like models and serve to contextualize "God"--which without contextualization is meaningless. It may be protested that this procedure imposes a foreign conceptual scheme upon the respondent, especially if that respondent is an avowed atheist. That is not the case and it can be seen not to be the case especially if the procedure is followed in a difficult case. Rather this is an exercise in translation, an attempt at understanding across convictional lines.

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[82] "Nothing" *is* a possible answer to this. While this type of answer is of interest *per se*, it is not discussed here. It seems that this answer removes the respondent from the game, as the solipsist removes himself from the 'game' of epistemology, or the suicide from the 'game' of life.

There is also the question of identifying as a cosmic disclosure a situation--perhaps extended in time--in which someone received or discovered an ultimate claim. The problem of the imposition of categories also arises here, but more acutely because the accompanying ontological claim, that what one encounters is God, is one not eliminated by translation from one set of categories to another.

However, in some senses this is a trivial claim. It asserts that one's fundamental commitment and beliefs arise as a response; it asserts that these cannot be *a se*. It makes no explicit claim concerning *what* acts on one to form those beliefs, but only *that* one is acted upon. Simply, it excludes solipsism as an option, but it excludes nothing else. For as soon as one attempts to say how one has been acted upon or influenced, one necessarily conceptualizes that which acts, the actor. What the actor is can be explicated through models and metaphors. That an action or set of actions occurs says nothing specific about the actor, but rather only makes the claim that commitment is a response, that actions have occurred.

This must not be mistaken for a psychological claim. Although parts of Ramsey's work seem to be outlining a psychology of religious belief, especially his notion of the evocative function of models, he is actually claiming that primary religious language is grounded in a situation; that it is not "airborne speculation" completely divorced from religious life or everyday life. That ultimate commitment is a response may be a psychological truism; it is also a philosophical thesis that functions to exclude solipsism as a viable option. Since it does no more than that, it might be considered trivial; but since "God" is functioning here only to name that which acts upon one and to which one responds (but with the response of making or discovering an ultimate claim), it ought not be considered offensive.

What this sort of position enables one to see is that in some senses, especially the attempt to make sense of religious experiences and attitudes, "the sensitive humanist and the theist have a common ground. It does not make everybody believers all round, but it does establish similarities which might not have been suspected between the theist's and the humanist's quest and attitude."[83] But neither does such a position necessarily blur differences, for the theist is distinguished by the fact that "the personal model is a dominant model for his discourse--the model by which most of his discourse is structured when he starts to talk of the activity which confonts him in a cosmic disclosure."[84] The sensitive humanist or even the deist or authentic atheist will be distinguished by the kinds of language he uses, by the models that dominate his discourse, and by his articulation of an ultimate claim. I would claim that considering an ultimate claim as arising from a cosmic disclosure helps to focus questions away from unanswerable ones of ontology onto questions that can be evaluated in terms of final empirical fit: which model(s) and commitment(s) yield a better life. These questions are not easy to answer, but they can be answered.

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[83] Ramsey, *Model for Divine Activity*, 63-64.

This section has attempted to show that the category of "key words" (and its synonyms) was a category that was finally rejected by Ramsey, even though it played an important role in his early work. "Key words" were construed, after 1960, as metaphors used to talk about that which confronted one in a cosmic disclosure situation. The category of "Key words" was replaced in Ramsey's thought by his use of two index words (although he did not call them that), "I" and "God." These words are factually uninformative, but simply serve to point to that which the models enable one to be articulate about. The claim that "I" points to nothing at all has been shown to be untenable; yet what "I" points to can be talked of only in terms of "me" or models for me. The claim that "God" points to nothing is also untenable, for that which "God" points to is, in Ramsey's terms, that which acts upon us. Yet "God" can only be talked of in terms of models, which are subject to evaluation. The category

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[84] *Ibid.*, 64.

"Key words" as espoused in *Religious Language* is an empty category; the suggestion that such words can be distinguished from models or metaphors was implicitly retracted by Ramsey. Their place is taken by "I" and "God" which are factually uninformative without resorting to models to contextualize them.

But if key words, apex words, and metaphysical integrator words are retracted, what is left? In terms of primary religious language, the qualified models discussed in the first two sections of this chapter must do the work of representing, referring, evoking, generating stories, and licensing discourse; by so doing they contextualize "God"; in so doing they express, convey, or evoke attitudes (or are at least congruent with attitudes expressed in myths, metaphors and religious symbols). The problems with preference, attribution and gradation in terms of efficacy and validity will be discussed, along with the notion of empirical fit, in Chapter Seven. The problems of the relation between primary and derivative religious language will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

DERIVATIVE RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Not all sorts of language reasonably called "religious" are talk of God or of the 'ultimate.' Prayer may be understood as talk to God, a saint or hero. Prayer or ritual may be designed as meditative techniques intended to produce an appropriate attitude. Formal creeds and confessions often mix talk of God with other sorts of talk. Religious maxims or commandments may take the form of injunctions to guide the life of a member of some community. While their derivation may be from traditional folk wisdom or the sayings of prophets, they are often found in religious texts. Prophecy itself and soothsaying are also found in religious texts. Often all of these shorter forms are ensconced in or derived from narrative sequences which may range from lengthy creation myths to small anecdotes about a hero, founder, saint, or even some fool who suffered when he ignored some injunction or betrayed a community or its ideals. Other sorts of talk could be added to this list.

If one looks at the five sorts of illocutionary acts as sketched by John L. Austin (verdictives, commissives, exercitives, behabatives and expositives), not only does one find that each sort has a place in 'religious' discourse, but also that all the verbs grouped under these heading (totalling nearly two hundred) can find a place in religious talk.[1] The problem of defining religious language is not going to be solved by surveying the sorts of discourse used in 'religious' activities. All sorts are used.

Ramsey did not directly distinguish religious language from other sorts of language. His theory contained prescriptions primarily intended to distinguish what sorts of religious language are bogus and what sorts are justifiable. But even this is of use in defining religious language. On Ramsey's terms, *primary religious language* is language that arises in a cosmic disclosure situation, that expresses ultimate claims, and that can evoke further disclosures. *Derivative religious language* is whatever language is logically dependent on primary religious language and used 'religiously.'[2] *Justifiable religious language* is religious language through which "logical pathways" can be traced from a cosmic disclosure situation and which may lead to further disclosures.

In the first part of this chapter, the hierarchical structure of primary religious language will be discussed to show its relations to derivative religious language and other sorts of language. In the second part, the rules by which Ramsey operated (though never laid out in one place) to trace logical pathways will be derived from his own work on derivative religious language.

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[1] Cf. J. L. Austin, *How to Do Things With Words*, Lecture Twelve.

[2] This definition implicitly admits that religious language is not formally distinguishable from other sorts of language. I assume that, in most cases, an appeal to ordinary language can decide whether or not some language is used religiously. In the interest of not complicating this discussion, I will not attempt to defend that assumption here.

I

During the mid-fifties, Ramsey tended to conceive of language as hierarchical. His discussion of the department store metaphor, with the various levels needing "lift-index" words to join them, illustrates this. Yet it is difficult to see this notion in *Religious Language*. This is because he apparently intended to postpone the development of an hierarchical theory of language to "Fact, Metaphysics and God." Russell's incomplete symbols, Bradley's degrees of truth, and Whitehead's distinction between concrete and abstract language, all were to contribute to this task. His view was probably indebted to Friedrich Waismann's paper "Language Strata,"[3] which Ramsey quoted in a number of places and reprinted in his 1971 collection of essays in the Philosophy of Religion, *Words About God*. In his introduction to Waismann's paper, however, there is no mention of language as hierarchical. Instead, Ramsey there pictured language "as an interweaving of various strands with words working in and between different contexts" and as "logically variegated rather than...homogenous in character."[4] Ramsey had evidently abandoned the task of presenting an hierarchical theory of language in general.

However, his theory of religious language was clearly hierarchical. Donald Evans noted a hierarchy of models in his discussions of qualified models. Evans discovered that some of the top models in Ramsey's hierarchy

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[3] F. Waismann, "Language Strata," *Logic and Language, Second Series*, ed. A. G. N. Flew (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953).

[4] Ramsey, *Words About God*, 113.

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were "love" and "person." Using a number of Ramsey's writings, Evans postulated that "person" dominated "power," "wisdom," and "love"; "love" in turn dominated "suffering servant," "remnant" and "life-given-as-ransom" in Christology, and more generally, "protector," which in turn dominated "king" and "judge." Having outlined some of Ramsey's dominant models, Evans continued with some questions that needed clarification:

> We can see that in each case a dominant model is more comprehensive than its subordinates, and binds them together. But does it do this by abstraction, by limiting subordinate models to whatever they have in common, and thus making discourse more 'reliable' in relation to the transcendence of God? Or does it do this by enrichment, by drawing together all the varied implications of the subordinate models, so that discourse becomes more 'fertile' in its 'articulation possibilities'? Ramsey seems to hold that dominant models work in both ways, though he sometimes mixes them. But perhaps the two approaches in the ordering of models are compatible if they are clearly separated.[5]

Ramsey responded to this essay in a letter to Evans:

> I would say that the "dominant models" were presupposed by the 'lower' models in so far as a one-sided relation of entailment could be established between discourse originating from the one model and the other.[6]

That is, the model "infinite love," for instance, presupposes a model "divine person," but "divine person" does not entail "infinite love." A longer strand of presupposition runs through the following series: "king" presupposes "protector" which presupposes "love" which presupposes "person." However, "person" does not entail "king."

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[5] Evans, "Ian Ramsey on Talk about God," 224. Evans referred to the following as sources for his ordering: "Talking About God: Models, Ancient and Modern," 84-89; *Christian Discourse*, 57-60, 83-86; "Theological Literacy" (The Alden-Tuthill Lectures for 1963, *The Chicago Theological Seminary Register* LIII [May, 1963], 9-10); and "A Personal God," 69. Interestingly, all these were written or delivered in 1963 or later.

[6] Ramsey, letter to Evans, 16 November 1970, 3.

This response dissolved Evans' query. What Evans had done, and what Ramsey often seemed to do, was to confuse or to fail to distinguish between the temporal or psychological priority of models and their logical priority. Ramsey was not claiming that qualified models were temporally or psychologically prior to other forms of religious discourse. He claimed that they were, however, logically prior in that they were presupposed by derivative religious language. Qualified models order the other sorts of religious language.

To illustrate this point, consider the metaphor that Ramsey identified as "mother": "In Deut. 32.18 the Hebrews were accused of forgetting 'God that gave thee birth', or rather more explicitly in Isa. 66.13 God promises Jerusalem: 'as one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you'."[7] Edifying stories about mothers and mothers' love are not necessarily religious stories. But in giving the model "mother" or "mother's love" a new application, a speaker adapts it to talk of "God." This involves two intentions. First, a speaker must intend (some would want to claim that he must be inspired) to talk of something that he felt.[8] This "feeling" is expressed in terms of the everyday, something that is easily understandable. Second, a speaker must intend to evoke an understanding of what he felt in the hearer in these terms. In this case, the speaker assumes that everyone knows what a mother is and what a mother's love is like. On the basis of that assumption, he claims that God is like a mother and God's love is like a mother's love. It is unnecessary to attribute more sophisticated theological understanding or complex intentions to a speaker. He or she felt something and attempted to articulate that something in familiar terms.

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[7] Ramsey, "Talking About God: Models, Ancient and Modern," 77.

[8] Cf. Chapter Two, above, for a discussion of Ramsey's use of "feeling."

On Ramsey's terms, this feeling could arise only as a response in a disclosure situation. If this metaphorical insight expressed an ultimate claim, then it could be said to arise in a cosmic disclosure situation. But the situation that grounded it was not purely subjective (since there are, on Ramsey's terms, no such things) but one that can be symbolized "I r O." In this case, the perceived "O" is understood as being like a mother. The speaker's ability to perceive and understand conditions the way in which he responds to that "O."[9]

When a metaphor is spoken or written, it is fixed. While it may later be retracted or modified, its being uttered and heard (or written and read) gives it a status independent of the speaker. When it is issued it assumes, as it is sometimes colorfully put, a life of its own and is amenable to analysis. In terms of the present example, what does it mean to claim that "God is our mother"? If nothing else, this involves further claims, models, and metaphors. If God is indeed like a mother, it presup-

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[9] Cf. the discussion of experience and language in Chapter Three, above.

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poses "God is a person." If it is claimed "God's love is like a mother's love," this presupposes "God is loving." Thus this metaphor presupposes other metaphors or models.

Metaphors are explorable. In terms of the present example, it could be asked, "Is the love of God identical to a mother's love, or is there some difference?" "Is God's love like a mother's love: she only has a few children to love, so does God love only a few, her children?" "Does this presuppose that God is a female person?" This list could go on and on. Is there some way to avoid the mire of endless questions and explications that even a simple metaphor apparently involves?

In Ramsey's work a way for sorting out which questions are appropriate (and which understandings are appropriate) is what he called the method of qualifying by jostling. But this method works only with models, metaphors, analogies, or similies of a single level: "God is not only mother, but father, brother, sister, aunt, uncle, cousin, husband, wife (and more?)." Among metaphors with a family resemblance, each member of the family qualifies the others. But the significance of this qualification does not become apparent in the use of the metaphors themselves, but only in articulations dependent upon the metaphors. Like the problems of metaphors, their significance cannot be explored in the metaphor, but only in talk dependent on the metaphor. To eliminate these problems, it is necessary to find a rule to outlaw problematical developments and unanswerable questions. Ramsey did not explicitly formulate such a rule, but there is one implicit in his work: *In talk derived from a metaphor, only* *that talk which is applicable to all the members of the metaphorical family is fully legitimate.*

Ramsey's extended discussion of the ransom theory of the atonement illustrated this rule. "We have seen already the bogus discourse this could generate. Questions were asked such as: Whom were we ransomed from? What was paid as a ransom? Was the slave-owner satisfied? Nay more, did he over-reach himself?"[10] While these questions are as bogus as questions about the sex of God, this rule shows why such questions are disqualified and distinguishes which ones are appropriate. Ramsey formulated the problem later in the discussion, "It is not the metaphors, but the descriptive misreadings of the metaphors, and erroneous developments of the metaphors that are to be condemned."[11] Certainly part of the background for this distinction between appropriate and inappropriate readings is the claim that metaphors are not literally descriptive. Their task is to evoke understanding and evince attitudes by a representation that is neither nonsense nor a literal picture.

Excluding all discussion of metaphors is as bad as permitting all discussion of metaphors. Taking the first option construes metaphors as unable to be evaluated and thus insignificant. Taking the second option makes metaphors insignificant because nothing is reasonably excluded; metaphors will inevitably lead to nonsense even though they do not seem to be nonsensical in themselves. Hence, this rule is needed to distinguish the useless and misdirected discourse based on a metaphor from the useful and informative discourse based upon a metaphor.

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[10] *Christian Discourse*, 51.

[11] *Ibid.*, 54.

If it seems that the claim that metaphors do not describe applies only to religious metaphors, a non-religious example can show it not to be so. Consider Romeo's exclamation, "Juliet is the sun!"[12] Taken descriptively, the following sorts of questions could be developed: Is her surface temperature about 6000° C? Are at least nine planets in orbit about her? Is she about 93,000,000 miles from Romeo? But these questions are absurd. They miss the point, but if Romeo is thought to be *describing* Juliet, they cannot be ruled out. Rather, he is representing her (as the source of 'warmth,' perhaps), evincing his attitude to her (love), and by so doing evokes in her (and the theater-goers) an understanding of his attitude and her attraction. The appropriate exploration of Romeo's metaphor will involve further metaphors or an insight common to all the metaphors Romeo applied to her. Juliet is also his "bright angel," "winged messenger," "dear saint," "fair saint," "my soul." The implications to be drawn from "Juliet is the sun" must also be drawn from the other metaphors used to represent Juliet. Similarly, the exploration and evaluation of metaphorical talk of God are in terms common to all the metaphors used of God. Each metaphor qualifies and limits the others. Religious metaphors are not distinguished from other metaphors by their lack of literal description.

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[12] Wm. Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act II, Scene II, l. 3. This is the famous 'balcony scene.'

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Ramsey did not clearly distinguish models and metaphors; in one place he claimed that all metaphors are models.[13] This does not mean that all models are metaphors. For instance, Tillich's "ground of being" or "Being-itself" combines two different qualifiers with one non-metaphorical model to generate two different qualified models.[14] We have seen that there is a hierarchy of qualified models in primary religious language. The status of models in this hierarchy is determined by a simple rule: higher or dominant models are those presupposed by other models. Is there any way to distinguish metaphors from models?

A metaphor may be grounded in a cosmic disclosure situation and presuppose an established member of the hierarchy of qualified models. Yet its status may be problematical. For example, someone has suggested that the Lord's Prayer be revised to "Our Parent, which art in heaven..." to eliminate the 'sexist' overtones present in the prayer. "Parent" fulfills the necessary condition for candidacy, in that being a parent entails being a person, which is a well-established Christian model for God, entailed by a number of other models. In the prayer, the model is qualified by "which art in heaven" so we have the qualified model of "heavenly parent." Yet there are those who would exclude this model on other (theological) grounds (which may or may not be 'sexist'). Whether or not the model of the "heavenly parent" is a Christian model for God, it has met the necessary conditions for being construed as part of primary religious language.

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[13] Ramsey, "Theology and Language: Some Illustrative Examples," 4.

[14] Cp. Ramsey, *Christian Discourse*, 81.

This highlights the question: How does one tell the difference between primary and derivative religious language? There are three possible answers to this question. First, one might simply aver that the two types of language occupy positions on a continuum. No more is to be said beyond claiming that the picture is blurred, the edges indistinct, the boundary not sharp. There is something to this, but if *no* distinctions can be made, why talk of a boundary or edge at all? Secondly, one could suggest that any model which is not entailed by another (lower) model is not part of the primary religious language, but rather part of derivative religious language. But if this is given close examination, it will be seen that there are no members of this set. Any accepted model can be the occasion for further insight that generates submodels: this is part of the evocative power of models. Submodels can be found for any model. Third, one could attempt to distinguish models from metaphors, construing models as primary religious language and metaphors as one sort of derivative religious language. Although this may not yield a hard and fast determination, such a differentiation can supply rough guidelines for distinguishing primary from derivative religious language. This type of distinction preserves the notion of the continuum in the first solution without falling into the trap of the second solution.

This third way of distinguishing models from metaphors is implicit in the work of Max Black, on which Ramsey depended heavily. In "Models and Archetypes" Black began the distinction this way: "Certainly there is some similarity between the use of a model and the use of a metaphor--

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perhaps we should say, of a *sustained and systematic* metaphor."[15] Black further claimed that a metaphor can bring separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation and that the results of this joining cannot be predicted ahead of time nor completely paraphrased in prose. "We can comment *upon* the metaphor, but the metaphor itself neither needs nor invites explanation and paraphrase. Metaphorical thought is a distinctive mode of achieving insight, not...an ornamental substitute for plain thought."[16] Black went on to claim that the same kinds of claims can be made for models. He discussed Stephen Pepper's "root metaphors," discovering that metaphors like these are "archetypes" 'buried' in many scientific theories. At the end of the essay he confessed that he has made so much of models, metaphors and archetypes because "of a conviction that the imaginative aspects of scientific thought have in the past been too much neglected. For science, like the humanities, like literature, is an affair of the imagination."[17]

According to Black, models and metaphors share some important characteristics. First, both can be called distinctive modes of achieving insight. Second, neither is reducible to plain thought (or even complex theories). Third, both can be commented on or paraphrased, but neither requires comment or paraphrase. Fourth, both have 'evocative' power. Black's distinctions of models from metaphors are not finally clear, for the key distinction is simply that a model is a "sustained and systematic metaphor."[18] This vague criterion requires some sharpening for it to be of use in distinguishing models from metaphors.

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[15] Black, "Models and Archetypes" in *Models and Metaphors*, 236. Emphasis added.

[16] *Ibid.*, 237.

[17] *Ibid.*, 243.

Black identified three useful specifications for models:

(1) capacity for analogical development

(2) systematic complexity of the source

(3) systematic deployability.

(A fourth criterion he suggested, "suggestiveness," will not help to distinguish models from metaphors: An unsuggestive metaphor is as poor a metaphor as an unsuggestive model is a poor model.) Can these criteria be used to distinguish between metaphors and models in religious language?

Like non-religious metaphors, religious metaphors sometimes do and sometimes don't evoke understanding. A non-sermonic instance of a religious metaphor helps to illustrate the distinctions between metaphor and model under the criteria suggested by Black's article. Francis Thompson's poem "The Hound of Heaven" illustrates a metaphor being systematically deployed and thoroughly explored. The image of God therein is of a hound with "strong Feet" and a "Voice more insistent than the Feet" pursuing the fleeing writer "down the nights and down the days" until the Hound catches him and turns out to be the One the writer sought, the only One worthy of his love. Thompson's poetic explorations display the full capacity for analogical development of this metaphor. Yet today the metaphor seems to limp. Thompson's hound image evokes not only the God who seeks one out in every nook and cranny, the God who is worthy of love, but also the horrible "Hound of the Baskervilles," fictional nemesis of Sherlock Holmes in A. Conan Doyle's novel. The metaphor may limp simply because today we live in an era different from, perhaps less opulent than, Thompson's era. However, the metaphor may fail to work as a model because its source lacks systematic complexity. This metaphor "operates largely with commonplace implications. You need only proverbial knowledge, as it were, to have your metaphor understood..."[19] Dog-associated commonplaces may be altogether too common to have this metaphor work as a model for God.

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[18] Ramsey further distinguished models for God from other sorts of models by their qualified form as well as their differing functions. But since qualified models are a species of analog-disclosure models, they will share characteristics common to other members of the genus.

Metaphors fail to work as models if they do not have a capacity for analogical development, or a systematic complexity in their source, or a systematic deployability. While on these grounds Thompson's poem may represent a marginal case, other grounds, not directly proposed by Black, can help to form guidelines implicit in "sustained."

The important question to answer about "sustained" is "by whom?" For a religious metaphor to work as a religious model it must be sustained by the community in which the metaphor is used. This aspect of the matter is not explored by either Black or Ramsey, but it is an important presupposition of their theories. For Black, all of the models and metaphors that he cites from the history of science have or had a following, a usefulness, or a 'vogue' among the scientific community, and all of the models for God to which Ramsey referred are derived from and occupy or occupied an important place in the Christian community. They are metaphors that have been sustained by a community and can be distinguished from those metaphors which have not been and are not sustained. For instance, in the context of a discussion of "eternal purpose," Ramsey wrote, "If we suppose 'eternal purpose' to be a self-contradictory phrase, we are mistakenly assimilating God to a watchmaker, a Managing Director, or a politician."[20] The metaphor "God is a managing director" was explored in terms of the Chairman of British Rail in *Religious Language*; the metaphor of "God is a watchmaker" was derived from Paley's version of the argument from design.[21] But in so far as these metaphors have not been sustained by the Christian community, they have not qualified as models for God.

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[19] *Ibid.*, 239. A more recent metaphor is the title of a book, *God is My Co-Pilot*. While the implications of this metaphor are not so common (few people can pilot airplanes), its capacities for analogical development seem rather limited. Besides this many Christians might reject it on the grounds that it smacks of Pelagianism.

Ramsey also claimed "...*models* for God *can* be and always are being *taken* away, criticized, graded, ordered, and we are committed in this way to an endless explication of what cosmic disclosure reveals."[22] While Ramsey did not specify how models for God are taken away and how one new model arises rather than another, it is not difficult to see the causes of this. Times change, and models that were previously useful and capable of development by the community are no longer evocative, or the developments possible from them are no longer interesting. In short, they are no longer "sustained." Should a new metaphor arise, and become an important part of that community's talk, and fulfill the three criteria set out by Black to distinguish metaphors from models, then it can legitimately be called a theological model within that community.[23] It will be one way that the community expresses an ultimate claim.

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[20] *Religious Language*, 99.

[21] Cf. *Religious Language*, 86ff, 94ff.

[22] *Christian Discourse*, 89.

We can now reconsider "God is our heavenly parent." The metaphor works as a model. It displays a systematic complexity of source: parenthood is a complex role. It shows a capacity for analogical development: not only the commonplaces of parenthood, but also its complexities can work to generate insight. It can be systematically deployed: it can ground many of the insights associated with "mother" and "father," two key models for God in the Judaeo-Christian tradition. It presupposes an already established model: person. This accounts for the fact that this metaphor can work as a model.

The question is whether this will be sustained by the community. Some otherwise valid models are not. This metaphor may be sustained and work as a model, but at this time, the question is not answerable; it now straddles the boundary between primary and derivative religious language. Whether it will be used as an expression of an ultimate claim of the Christian community is a question that can only be solved with time: if it is sustained, it is part of that expression, and is subject to the tests the community and individuals within and without the community put to ultimate claims. If it now expresses some individual's ultimate claim, it is subject to those tests now. But it is not yet a part of the primary religious language of the Christian community, and so testable only as any derivative religious language might be, according to the criteria developed in section two.

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[23] In addition, part of the justification of that model will involve that it is qualified to preserve the mystery, as Ramsey put it.

Other metaphors occur in sermons or narratives without becoming part of primary religious language. This is often because they are deficient in one or more of the ways suggested by Black or because they are not sustained by the community. But there are other sorts of religious language, *e.g.*, creeds and stories, that occupy an important place in the community's tradition. Basically, the same sorts of rules that guided the discussion of metaphors can be applied to these. They are properly called religious narratives or creeds if they presuppose a model or models established in the primary religious language of the community in which they arise, or if they generate a model that becomes part of the accepted primary religious language of a community. They, like metaphors, are to be tested for adequacy, in terms of the criteria to be discussed.

Ramsey's theory of religious language can account for that language, justifiably called religious, that is not part of primary religious language, even though Ramsey rarely discussed derivative religious language, except to attempt to trace logical paths through the language of Christian doctrine. His concern with the paraphrases and explanations of primary religious language seems somewhat different from a concern with the myths, metaphors and narratives that play such a large role in religious discourse. However, these apparently different uses of language share a formal similarity in that both presuppose primary religious language, and that the rules for discerning proper paraphrase apply to both sorts of derivative religious language. The next section will be devoted to a discussion of those rules.

II

Ramsey never schematized his method or rules for glossing a model. He did, however, discuss a number of doctrines with the intention of tracing pathways through the tangle of theological discourse. In order to discern and evaluate the method and rules he worked by, three of these discussions will be considered here, doctrines of the atonement,[24] of hell,[25] and a posthumously-published discussion of the use of the models "presence," "economy," and "spirit" in Christian discourse.[26] With exposition of these completed, I shall list and evaluate the rules and methods that Ramsey used to sort out justified and bogus items in the talk dependent on the ultimate claims of Christianity.

What Ramsey intended to do for atonement theology was to "examine just a few of the strands we can discern in discourse about the Atonement to see if we can separate out more reliable arguments from less reliable arguments in this tangled skein of theological discourse."[27] He noted that in the earliest preaching, the Crucifixion had little significance, but rather was presupposed by the *kerygma*. Yet the Crucifixion was a 'stumbling block' for the Jews, so its significance had to be elucidated. Ramsey suggested that the primary question is "How is the Crucifixion made the occasion of a cosmic disclosure, and how does it provide us with the traditional models which were used as ways of explicating its significance?"[28] First, there is what he called the "simple account" in Paul's writings:

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[24] in *Christian Discourse*, Chapter Two.

[25] "Hell" in *Talk of God, Royal Institute of Philosophy Lectures, Volume Two*, 1967-1968 (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd.; New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969), 207-225.

[26] Iam T. Ramsey, *Models for Divine Activity* (London: SCM Press, 1973), Chapter Four.

> The Crucifixion matched with Isaiah 53 becomes the occasion of a disclosure, and there then arises the possibility of interpreting the significance of the Crucifixion in terms of the model of justification to supplement talk of an empowering by God's will, and of our unity with Christ... Crucifixion becomes the focus of a disclosure and takes on a significance of its own, and by providing us with a model grounded in the cosmic disclosure it thereby provides for our further articulation about that significance.[29]

Second, he related a more sophisticated Pauline account, the doctrine of the Remnant:

> It invites us to look at the Old Testament as the story of a remnant, a story of how the group of those who faithfully keep the Law progressively declines in number of the years--until at the time of the Crucifixion this faithful Remnant contains only one member. What is going to happen to that promise given to Abraham...that in him and in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed? Will God reject his people?

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[27] *Christian Discourse*, 29.

[28] *Ibid.*, 31.

[29] *Ibid.*, 33. Ramsey refers to I Cor. 15:3 and Rom. 5:9.

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> By no means. At this 'crucial' point--at the Crucifixion--the process was reversed, and the old exclusive Israel of the Law gave place to the new inclusive Israel of the Christian Church.[30]

From these models of the atonement, based in the cosmic disclosure centered on the cross, a host of doctrines of the atonement were developed in order to "enable men to talk more freely of what God did somehow through Jesus on the Cross."[31] Ramsey noted that in addition to the justification theory (the 'simple' account), there were "models which led to doctrines of substitution, satisfaction, reconciliation, redemption, propitiation and expiation."[32]

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Following C. H. Dodd's commentary on Romans, Ramsey noted that the theory of justification emerged from two models, (the Greek) "acquittal in a law court" and (the Hebrew) "deliverance," noting that the former is more influential, and that it gives an "opportunity of emphasizing the sovereignity of God."[33] However, when the Greek is translated into the Latin (*justum facere*) "to justify" then becomes "to make righteous," and this leads to questions: "How are we, being sinners, *made* righteous? How did the Cross *make* men righteous? How did the blood [of Christ] effect justification?"[34] Ramsey then continued:

> Quite oblivious to the logical improprieties of such questions, so that the blood is pictured in some causal, quasi-scientific fashion, as bringing about a change of state, people began to

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[30] *Ibid.*, 34, with reference to Romans 10 and 11, and Gen 12:3, 18:18.

[31] *Ibid.*, 35. [32] *Ibid.*

[33] *Ibid.*, 38, Quoting Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1960; first published 1932).

[34] *Ibid.*, 39.

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> speak of the change in man's condition from a 'state of sin' to a 'state of righteousness.'[35]

Noting that the model of justification had given rise to elaborate articulations in Protestant theology, Ramsey claimed that the model of justification is "dovetailed" into the model of substitution "whereby Jesus suffered in our stead" in order to face the moral objection that God was acquitting guilty men. To avoid the complex theory of transferred guilt and to deal with the moral problem, "others have dovetailed the justification model with the satisfaction model...tied to feudalism where the overlord had to be satisfied before a status quo could be restored."[36] But this, too, seems to run into problems:

> But does this avoid the frontier clash with the language of morals? Again, can the relations between the Father and Jesus presupposed by the satisfaction model be made consistent with the rules for Christian talking about God which are given in the Chalcedonian definition? What heavy logical weather our atonement theology has run into, as it has developed its models.[37]

Then there is the model of reconciliation, which doesn't raise so many logical problems, but has problems of its own: "This model does not seem to afford us any close interpretation of the cross. To ask how the death of Christ 'reconciles' is to present us with a logical conundrum."[38] Perhaps preferable to this is the model of redemption, drawn from the context of freeing a slave or a ransom being paid. Yet this model, according to Ramsey, had "generated some of the most unedifying discussions." He went on to highlight some of them:

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[35] *Ibid.* [36] *Ibid.*

[37] *Ibid.*, 39-40. [38] *Ibid.*, 40.

> To whom was the ransom paid? Whom have we been redeemed from? To answer such questions discourse has been extended to include the devil and original sin, and the waters have become deeper as cosmological speculations flourished unabated and excursions were made into primitive anthropology.[39]

The model of propitiation, viewing Christ's death as a gift to appease someone offended runs into trouble, too. "Does it not suggest a God who is some kind of megalomaniac? Here the problem is the same as arose around the model of satisfaction, viz. how to be articulate in a way that is theologically consistent with the rest of our discourse about God."[40] The model of expiation runs into trouble not only with the Chalcedonian definition, but also with the question "why the death of an innocent man should make it right or just for God to forgive those who were really sinful?"[41] Ramsey's point is that while each of these models may be illuminating in different ways for different people, "when we become to any degree articulate in terms of these models, the discourse bristles with difficulties."[42] While this is not unexpected, discourse derived from these models was quite 'unedifying':

> It was, I fear, only too easy to suppose that these words--justification, satisfaction, substitution, reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, expiation--were not models at all, but described procedural transactions. It was supposed that these were words, describing and labelling (so to say) the machinery of the Atonement, each describing a species of atonement engineering.[43]

Ramsey then goes on to suggest that in the Epistle to the Hebrews there is a model or parable that skillfully marries sacrificial and metaphysical language to evoke a disclosure of the significance of the Crucifixion. Ramsey's conclusion of his discussion of this Epistle shows why he thought the discourse there was superior to some of the others cited:

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[39] *Ibid.*, 42. [40] *Ibid.*, 42. [41] *Ibid.*, 43.

[42] *Ibid.* [43] *Ibid.*, 44

> In other words, the writer was loath to isolate one element of his model, to isolate death from the wider context of sacrifice. He chose to take the whole sacrificial discourse as providing currency for the cosmic disclosure. He was wise not to isolate a particular concept from the model in which it was native, and he was cautious about the inferences he permitted from his model.[44]

These notes of "wisdom" and "caution" are critical in discourse drawn from any model, metaphor, or narrative.

Ramsey then turned to discussions of the atonement by Irenaeus and Tertullian. It was not using metaphors that made Irenaeus' theory problematical, but reading those metaphors as if they were descriptive. The point of the theories of the atonement must not be lost:

> Doctrines of the Atonement thus exist to point us to a cosmic disclosure around the Cross, and to give us hints for reliable talking about what is disclosed. They must never be supposed to be official reports describing with polished precision the preliminaries, the details, and the benefits of some major transaction in the cosmic market...A beautifully smooth theology, full of 'definite formulations' and characterized by tight arguments will be too like a Deed of Conveyance or an Auditor's Report to have any religious significance.[45]

Tertullian's writings especially showed how the reading of metaphors as descriptive could generate bogus inferences:

> Tertullian...certainly was ruthless and thoroughgoing in developing his model. But instead of plotting back all his assertions to the model and the cosmic disclosure in which they were based--he forgot the origin from which the discourse was hewn, supposed his language to be descriptively true, extrapolated it at will, and then (like so many other theologians) supposed

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[44] *Ibid.*, 48. [45] *Ibid.*, 55.

> states of affairs to have existed which justified the language he had elaborated.[46]

He concluded this discussion as follows:

> But the bigger the spread, the more the heap of theologizing buries the treasure which it meant originally to preserve. And a last disastrous effort is made to secure a reference for the language by positing realms such as Hell, instead of remembering, with F. D. Maurice, that every doctrine--doctrines of Hell not excluded--was designed as a pointer to God, and not as a colourful description of a counterpart world. What all this shows is that the more we feign answers to bogus questions, the more verbal momentum we generate until we have such an extensive scheme that we cannot believe it is not true, whereupon we invent facts to fit, and in our unbridled enthusiasm for new realms of reference forget all about the cosmic disclosure to which the language must lead us back if it is not to be a hollow sham indeed.[47]

The notes that Ramsey claimed to be critical, wisdom and caution, are certainly rather vague, but they can be specified. Before turning to Ramsey's discussion of hell, a preliminary list of rules can be extracted from his treatment of the models of the atonement and discourse generated from them to specify the wisdom of avoiding the unbridled enthusiasm for grand speculative schemes. Specifically,

Discourse generated from models must

(a) be related to a cosmic disclosure of God.

(b) not be presumed to be a description of this world or another.

(c) not presume that the model that licenses that discourse is descriptive.

(d) not be isolated from the model in which it was native.

(e) be consistent with the rest of our talk of God.

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[46] *Ibid.* [47] *Ibid.*, 57.

In addition to these five rules for distinguishing valid from bogus developments from models, there were criteria of preference operative in terms of this generated discourse. (1) Whatever model provides the most comprehensive and reliable discourse is to be preferred.[48] (2) Models which generate inferences more consistent with the rest of our religious language are to be preferred.[49] A third criterion, simplicity, may also be present (that is, should criteria [1] and [2] yield no preference, the simpler model is to be preferred) but it is not clear.[50] Reserving discussion of these, we turn to Ramsey's discussion of hell.

In "Hell" Ramsey identified the popular belief as "the place, in a life after death, of endless punishment."[51] In this form he identified three major difficulties with the doctrine: its moral repugnance (what wrongdoing could deserve *endless* punishment?), its inconsistency with the Christian doctrine of God (either it conflicts with the notion of God's individual care or it demands a restriction on God's love or knowledge or both), and its cosmological difficulties (where would a life after death similar to or continuous with a life before death be located?)[52] He discovers three reasons for the attractions of this theme in spite of these difficulties: its place in Judaeo-Christian literature (where 'descriptions' of hell occur), the belief in the permanent significance of moral choice (where those who do evil are either punished, or forced to depart from the rest, in consequence of their choices), and a confusion of a reverential refusal to question God with an indefensible refusal to question doctrines of God.[53]

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[48] Cf. *ibid.*, 58. [49] Cf. *ibid.*, 57-58.

[50] Cp. *ibid.*, 44-48. Insofar as these three have to do with the problem of preference, they will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

[51] Ramsey, "Hell" in *loc. cit.*, 207. An earlier discussion of this doctrine was undertaken in *On Being Sure in Religion* (London: Athlone Press, 1963) in the chapter entitled "Eternal Punishment." This later paper incorporates many (if not all) of the points of the earlier discussion without the complicating factor that the earlier was done in the context of the theology of F. D. Maurice.

[52] *Ibid.*, 207-10.

In discussions of the doctrine of God and the doctrine of hell, phrases such as "God chose to produce this universe rather than another in which there is no hell" occur. Ramsey claimed that all such locutions should be converted to the "formal mode" so that we can "grapple with the issues *not* from the point of view as to whether God could or could not do this, that, or the other, *but* as constituting a problem in our talk about God."[54] The reason for moving into the formal mode was to avoid confusion:

> But...the form in which this and many other theological discussions are cast, logical questions and reference questions are most unedifyingly mixed and confused. It is only when we avoid speaking of God in too human terms that we shall avoid confounding these two sorts of questions as well as the rather pointless difficulties which centre around what God can or cannot do, whether he fails and so on. Let us realise that we shall never be in a position to talk about God's intentions, and that in any case it is not what God can or cannot do, but rather what we can or cannot say about him. Recalling the quotation from Augustine: in all this we do *not* judge God, but only our understandings of, our discourse about God.[55]

This quotation recapitulates Ramsey's basic position, that theology is language and that many theological discussions involve questions of or confusions in language. Of course, translation into the formal mode may not remedy all confusions, but often it will clarify them. Retranslation back into the material mode can then be accomplished without making mistakes in reference and logic.

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[53] *Ibid.*, 210-12. [54] *Ibid.*, 214. [55] *Ibid.*, 215.

In the context of discussing the "offensive" speculations of Hugh of St. Victor, Ramsey claimed that it is "part of my case that these speculative constructions arise, as does much unsatisfactory theological argument, from interweaving without due logical care various themes each of which may be in and for itself reputable."[56] Ramsey goes on to identify five separate themes that combine to yield the paradox that the infinitely good God should intend (some of) his creatures to sin. First is the ultimacy of God (which does not mean that an understanding of God is ultimate). Second are biblical themes, especially eschatological ones (*e.g.* Is. 65:24), which are misconstrued as descriptive. Third, is the application of human terms such as choice, decree, decision, purpose to God, which used without qualifiers, yields "morally and intellectually disastrous" results. Fourth is the incorporation of moral insights, which, if they are immunised from further moral criticism, are disastrous.[57] Fifth is an illegitimate weaving of two themes:

> ...as a matter of empirical fact and judging from our present experience it looks *prima facie* as if there will always be those who will never respond to the Christian gospel. But incoherence arises when this plausible judgment of fact is interwoven with plausible moral insights about punishment, the whole being then contextualized, however, in discourse which besides misconstruing the Bible in a way at which I have already hinted above, i.e.

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[56] *Ibid.*, 217. [57] *Ibid.*, 216-19.

> descriptively, commits the logical blunder about the priority and ultimacy of God. It is out of such indiscriminate interweaving that fully-fledged doctrines of Hell have often appeared.[58]

Especially in terms of Biblical images, these are not to be taken as pictures of a life after death. "Such descriptions as we have of fire, brimstone and the gnashing of teeth have not to be taken as having any kind of easy direct relationship to foam extinguishers, the chemistry of sulphur, and dentists respectively."[59] However suggestive these pictures are, they are not descriptive. He also noted that these peripheral images receive more attention than that which is central:

> They forget that the further we go from the centre, the more peripheral will be our religious discourse, whose one and only subject is God. Fire, brimstone and teeth are all peripheral to the discourse, and apocalyptic as well as parables always need to be read around a particular point at which a disclosure of God is claimed. To put it very crudely, most parables and most apocalyptic need reading backwards, back into the disclosure of God which is at their heart and centre. Once we recognise in this way the imaginative logic of eschatology and the parables, the great location difficulties of a doctrine of Hell completely disappear, and we also see where, and where not God comes in.[60]

The significance of moral decision is one of the themes identified as being part of the doctrine of hell, "the view that the taking of moral decisions involves an attitude to God so that an evil decision alienates the agent from God, a condition to which the images are meant to point."[61] These images are ones of loneliness or despair. In that case, "any doctrine of Hell consistent with the Gospel must be such that, interpreting a situation of loneliness, or despair, it will lead from that situation to one of cosmic disclosure where God reveals himself."[62] More generally, whatever doctrine or image of hell is used, it is to be used to point to God. This deals with the "problem" of Hell in Christian discourse, which is "the problem of using these models to point to God, to talk of God, without running into discourse which is morally repugnant or blatantly inconsistent with other regions of religious discourse."[63] This then raises the problem of universal redemption, redemption in spite of or without relation to moral choices and actions. Ramsey suggested that the conditions for accepting a doctrine of universalism are being "able to speak consistently *both* of God and his love and his power, and *also* about the cosmic significance of moral decision, the cosmic loneliness and separation it involves, and so on."[64]

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[58] *Ibid.*, 219. [59] *Ibid.* [60] *Ibid.*, 221. [61] *Ibid.*

Ramsey's paper intended to show how the doctrines of hell can be held without the moral repugnance and cosmological difficulties that usually accompany it, which typically arise from (and encourage further) logical blunders. He concluded:

> Doctrines of Hell provide a good example of the complex way in which the theological discourse emerges as a multi-model, many-stranded discourse, some of the strands being derived from biblical images, and some from moral and existential insights. They also provide...a good example of how theology can be bedevilled by misunderstandings of its point, its status and its character... Doctrines of Hell...afford a particular example of the complex character of Christian discourse, and when various misunderstandings have been cleared up even these doctrines

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[62] *Ibid.*, 222. [63] *Ibid.*

[64] *Ibid.*, 224. Although Ramsey seems to accept this doctrine, he does not here develop a theory that fulfills these conditions. In some ways that is done in his as yet unpublished essay, "The Problem of Evil."

> may help us to see in their own way the kind of situation in which all religious discourse is grounded, a 'cosmic disclosure' reached from the direction of separation, loneliness and despair where, the Christian would claim, God reveals himself.[65]

Ramsey's discussion of hell can be seen to work in line with the five rules outlined previously. As the conclusion shows, talk of hell not pegged to a cosmic disclosure is considered bogus. Talk of hell that presumes to be a description of a life after death continuous with life before death is, at best, dubious.[66] Doctrines of hell separated from the model in which they rose generate bogus problems and miss the emphasis that was important in the original model.[67] The moral repugnance of talk of hell is primarily due to its inconsistency with the rest of our talk of God. Finally, the most bogus discourse about, and doctrines of, hell (especially Hugh of St. Victor's speculations) take the model on which it is based, as well as the talk generated, as descriptive.

"Hell" also makes two further points germane to this discussion. The first is that taking God as authoritative or ultimate does not entail taking any doctrine of God as authoritative or ultimate. This, of course, ties in with the notion of "tentativity" in Ramsey's thought. The second point is the suggestion that translation from the material mode into the formal mode is a useful technique for sorting out the problems in any area of discourse. Although this is one of Ramsey's typical maneuvers, this essay is one of the few places where the method is explicitly acknowledged and its power comprehensively illustrated. Nor does this maneuver exclude retranslation of the results of this sort of analysis back into the material mode. Rather translation identifies what sorts of talk in the material mode could be justified and what sorts of use can be made of that talk (*e.g.*, evocative, representative, etc.).

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[65] *Ibid.*, 224. [66] Cf. *Ibid.*, 210. [67] Cf. *Ibid.*, 212.

The final discussion to be considered is a bit different from the preceding two in that it does not concentrate on one doctrine, but on the use of a set of doctrines in Christian discourse. In *Models for Divine Activity* Ramsey identified two sorts of contextualizations of "Holy Spirit." First, it is a model which might "be called a 'dominant model'--a model which talks of the activity of God--indeed of the activity which is God."[68] In other words, "the Spirit" is identified with "God." Second, there is a more restricted use of "Spirit" to speak of the activity of God in Jesus (and later in the Church):

> This was a particularized community with, or characterized by, a particular structure, its ministry; a particularized book, the Bible; and particularized means and activities, the sacraments; all expressing a particularized activity of God which was continuous with God's activity in Christ. Here was the Holy Spirit as the 'Paraclete' which continued Christ's work...
>
> Now to the difficulty which arises when the restricted model of the Holy Spirit is associated with the alternative model of 'Father and Son'. When this association occurs, 'Holy Spirit' is a model which is assimilated to and takes its place alongside 'the Son', and in this setting the task of theologians is to elaborate rules by which talk of the one is to be related to talk of the other.[69]

Ramsey then proposed to understand some patristic terms as rules for guiding talk derived from these two uses of "Spirit": "I simply want to make

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[68] *Models for Divine Activity*, 44.

[69] *Ibid.*, 45.

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the point that these highly stylized doctrines are not descriptions of what some have called the inner life of the Godhead; they are rules for our consistent talking, rules for sorting out discourse from models."[70] The highly stylized doctrines to which Ramsey refers include the *filioque* clause of the Nicene Creed, the concept of *hyparxis* in Irenaeus (which pictured three ways of coming forth: unbegotten, begotten, proceeding) and the doctrine of *perichoresis*.

> ...what I am saying is that the point of all these picturesque stories is a logical one, viz., to remind the reader that in discourse deriving from the model of Father sending Son, and its associated (restricted) model of Holy Spirit, the elements Father, Son and Holy Spirit designate three logically distinct strands of discourse for talking about the activity of God which is the Christian gospel. These strands have further to be united if they are to become logically complete talk of the activity of God which is the gospel.
>
> But let not my main point be lost in detail. Here in these highly stylized doctrines of *hyparxis, perichoresis* and the rest, are pictures acting as mnemonics--slogan reminders--to suggest various logical rules. They are not, *not*, models, let alone picturing models. They are of a different logical order altogether for their purpose is to guide our paths in Christian discourse which proceeds from a multitude of models.[71]

He went on to claim that these various rules or mnemonic pictures are guides toward a coherent, consistent and comprehensive Christian theology.[72]

This passage suggests further criteria for guiding talk derived from models. While the predominant import of the previous discussions was to "weed out" bogus discourse, the thrust of *Models for Divine Activity* is to find reliable discourse. The previously formulated rules were operative here, but they occupied a less prominent place in the first three chapters of that book and disappear almost entirely in the discussions in its fourth chapter. The new element is the rather perplexing suggestion that some Patristic terms are to be understood as "guidelines." Unfortunately, the importance of these guidelines in Ramsey's later thought is not clear.[73]

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[70] *Ibid.*, 46. [71] *Ibid.*

[72] *Ibid.*, 47. Cf. *Freedom and Immortality*, 47, for a slightly different approach.

III

The rules found operative in Ramsey's work are generally critical in import. (The guidelines in *Models for Divine Activity* were to be constructive, but their status is not clear.) These rules can serve as guides for the evaluation of all derivative religious language, whether metaphor, narrative, creed, prayer, etc. All of these are logically dependent on primary religious language and the ultimate claims, grounded in a cosmic disclosure situation, that primary religious language articulates. Ramsey's theory is not limited to primary religious language, as some have claimed, but also can account for other sorts of language reasonably called religious. I have offered criteria, based on the work of Ramsey and Max Black, for distinguishing primary religious language from derivative religious language. The next chapter will deal with the problem of the justification of religious language.

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[73] Harry McClatchey chose to publish *Models for Divine Activity* after Ramsey's death in spite of unrevised obscurities in the text and although Ramsey had neither "finished worrying at the wording nor revised the text to his satisfaction." (*Ibid.*, ix.) Apparently some of the obscurities he referred to include these "mnemonic-guidelines."

The major problem that arises in connection with Ramsey's theory at this point is that the rules for distinguishing derivative religious language and for developing talk based on primary religious language are prescriptive rather than descriptive. His prescription intended to distinguish justifiable religious language from bogus religious language, not to distinguish religious language from other sorts of language. But even these prescriptions can help to define religious language.

Religious language is composed of two roughly distinguishable forms. Primary religious language is language grounded in a cosmic disclosure situation, expressing ultimate claims, representing the 'Other' met in that situation, evocative of further disclosures. Derivative religious language is language licensed by primary religious language, logically dependent on primary religious language. Justifiable derivative religious language is derivative religious language through which "logical pathways" can be traced from a cosmic disclosure situation and which may lead to another such situation.

These definitions of religious language present a much broader theory than previous commentators have ascribed to Ramsey. Their weakness is that they may be too broad. However, this is a typically Ramseyan 'weakness,' for he tended to be inclusive rather than exclusive. His position *was* broad; he had to account for the fact that, on his view, any situation could give rise to a cosmic disclosure; so any and all types of utterances could be religious; and any term derived from these could become a model to talk of a disclosure. Following the path marked out by

Max Black, he concentrated on metaphors, although in principle any language reasonably called religious can supply terms for qualified models. Only language that was descriptive *and no more* was excluded.[74] Thus the rules derived for evaluating a religious metaphor apply as well to all other sorts of religious utterances. The rules for weeding out bogus discourse based on models apply to all sorts of religious utterances as well because *all* religious language is based on implicit or explicit ultimate claims expressed in implicit or explicit qualified models.

The important distinction Ramsey made was not between religious language and other sorts of language, but between justifiable religious language and other language. Justifiable religious language, however, is not necessarily justified religious language. Chapter Seven will explore Ramsey's theory of the justification of religious language.

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[74] Whether *any* utterances can be 'merely descriptive' is a debatable point, but Ramsey believed that any utterance had non-describable presuppositions or components. Cf. Ramsey, "Polanyi and J. L. Austin," 170 and *passim*.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

THE JUSTIFICATION OF RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

Discussion of Ramsey's theory of the structure of religious language in the previous two chapters has shown that Ramsey's account is more complex and comprehensive than other commentators have allowed. This chapter will show that his theory of the justification of religious language is also more complex and comprehensive than it seems on first glance. The first part of this chapter is devoted to the theory of empirical fit. I shall show that this theory is composed of two distinguishable major themes, an *empirical justificatory thesis* and a *metaphysical justificatory thesis*. Combined with the notion of the cosmic disclosure situation, which functions as a defensive *general justificatory thesis*, these theses provide important guidelines for differentiating justifiable from unjustifiable systems of religious language.

However, these theses in themselves are unable to solve the problem of preference in religious language. Once several models or systems of religious discourse have met the tests of the justificatory theses, how does one decide among them? The next chapter discusses the difficulties in Ramsey's work which involve the problem of preference. Although there are indications in Ramsey's works of the direction a solution to this problem could take, he attempted no explicit solution. There I shall attempt to construct a solution to this problem consistent with the indications Ramsey gave. Once this is completed, we shall be in a position to offer a general assessment of Ramsey's theories in Chapter Nine.

I

Like his "key words," the concept of empirical fit had a curious history in Ramsey's thought. It did not appear in any writing before *Models and Mystery* (1964). In light of the late emergence of this concept in Ramsey's work, the question arises whether Ramsey subscribed to other sorts of justificatory theses in his earlier works. In fact, there were two attempts at justification that appeared earlier.

What I will call a *general justificatory thesis* was a defensive thesis directed against the advocates of "narrow empiricism." This thesis claimed that a cosmic disclosure situation, the empirical anchorage from which religious language arises, is the "fact which justifies" religious language.[1] This fact, variously called "non-inferential (subject-object) awareness" or "cosmic disclosure situation," enabled one to speak religiously (to use religious language). However, the existence of this fact or situation offered no criteria for determining *what* one can or should *say* (what specimens of religious language can be justified). So this thesis had no value as an attempt to justify any specific religious utterance. It had defensive value as an attempt to justify religious

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[1] Cf. Ramsey, *Miracles*, 21; "Theology and Language," 4; *Religious Language*, 15, 28.

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language generally as being grounded in experience, rather than as "mere word spinning." The positive value of this thesis has already been discussed in Chapters Three and Four in terms of the "cosmic disclosure situation." Further discussion of the general justificatory thesis, that religious language is grounded in a situation that cannot be talked of adequately in "narrow empirical" terms, will not be undertaken here. Yet it should be noted that this played an important, if defensive, role in the justification of religious language.[2]

Second, a *metaphysical justificatory thesis* appeared in most of Ramsey's works from *Miracles* (1951) onwards. This thesis declared that the more consistent, simple, comprehensive and coherent a linguistic scheme (metaphysical map or multi-model discourse) is, the better it is. The best discussion of this thesis occurred in "Fact, Metaphysics and God," where it was discussed in terms of "metaphysical words." As noted in Chapter Five, this category was later incorporated into the category of "qualified models" (excepting the specific words "I" and "God"). With that warning in mind, we can turn to the discussion of this thesis.

In "Fact, Metaphysics and God," Ramsey discussed the criterion "consistency" as follows:

> Granted then the logical possibility of various metaphysical systems, how do we decide between one system and another? The test I think must be four-fold and must relate to the object language which the metaphysical map contains as well as the meta-

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[2] It is not clear whether Ramsey realized that the only virtue of this point was defensive, at least in his early work. However, by 1960 (when *On Being Sure in Religion* was delivered as lectures), it is clear that he saw the limited value of this "empirical anchor."

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> physical words which round off these languages and bring unity to the map. That metaphysical system will be better than another if, with regard to the object languages which the system contains, all these languages are most thoroughly broken down into distinguishable logical areas. This, it seems to me, is the point behind the old emphasis of consistency within a metaphysical system. For a map will not display consistency if there are still logical regions to be separated.[3]

An important part of this criterion was that if logical regions are clearly separated from each other, category mistakes would be either eliminated or diminished, which would obviously improve some scheme's consistency. While this first criterion applied to object language (probably equivalent to "models" and talk derivative from them), the second, "simplicity," applied to the metaphysical words specifically: "The fewer metaphysical words it demands to complete the object languages and to unite them" the better a metaphysical system is.[4] A monistic scheme would fill this criterion perfectly, although the other criteria might pose some problems. The third criterion, "comprehension," was "The more comprehensive the whole map is in its survey of the universe," the better it is.[5] A radical pluralism would meet this criterion, but would have difficulty meeting the others. Finally, there was the criterion "coherence": "The more coherent the map is in relating the diverse features of the universe most concisely together," the better it is.[6] These last two criteria were clearly applied to the map as a whole, rather than either to the object language or to the metaphysical words alone. Of course, all of these criteria were related to each other and no metaphysical scheme could, on Ramsey's terms, fulfill them perfectly, since no scheme offered a complete picture of reality, but was rather "only a map"[7] of the terrain. In Ramsey's view, theism as a metaphysical system received a high rating: "Further, because of its relative simplicity and immense coherence and comprehensiveness, we can the more readily see why theism as a metaphysics has had the immense vogue and popularity it has had."[8] Interestingly, Ramsey omitted comment on theism's consistency; the recurring problems that form "the problem of evil" count against theism.

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[3] Ramsey, "Fact, Metaphysics and God," B78/191.

[4] *Ibid.* [5] *Ibid.* [6] *Ibid.*

In his later work, Ramsey applied these criteria to multi-model discourse. In *Models for Divine Activity* he mentioned the four criteria in these terms:

> How do we decide between two articulations from cosmic disclosures, between two areas of multi-model discourse? I answer: we shall reasonably prefer that discourse which (a) formally is the most simple, coherent, comprehensive and consistent; (b) materially establishes the best empirical fit.[9]

Ramsey then proceeded to discuss the criterion "empirical fit" without discussing the metaphysical justificatory thesis! In spite of that, one point was made clear in this discussion: the metaphysical justificatory thesis was a *formal* criterion. It was distinguished from the theory of empirical fit, a *material* criterion.

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[7] Ramsey, *Miracles*, 29.

[8] Ramsey, "Fact, Metaphysics and God," B 85/198-86/199.

[9] Ramsey, *Models for Divine Activity*, 62.

In another context Ramsey made it clear that all religious language must be graded by these formal criteria.[10] Not only must primary religious language meet these criteria, but so must derivative religious language (the discourse licensed by primary religious language) meet them. However, Ramsey did not clarify this thesis in any single place. Nor did he align his earlier unpublished developments of it with his later published citations of the formal criteria.

However, these criteria were operative in his work. The best explication of the metaphysical justificatory thesis is to be found in the rules generated in Chapter Six to guide the development of derivative religious language. I discovered five rules:

Discourse generated from models must

(a) be related to a cosmic disclosure of God.

(b) not be presumed to be a description of this world or another.

(c) not presume that the model that licenses that discourse is descriptive.

(d) not be isolated from the model in which it was native.

(e) be consistent with the rest of our talk of God.[11]

The primary function of the first four was to weed out bogus discourse and dissolve pseudo-problems. In this context their function was limited to eliminating unjustifiable discourse. The fifth rule applied the criterion of "consistency" as discussed in "Fact, Metaphysics and God" to religious language, rather than to metaphysical schemes.

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[10] Cf. "Letter to the Editor" in *Theology LXXIV*, No. 609 (March, 1971), 126.

[11] Cf. Chapter Six, 198, *supra*.

The first four rules also served to sort out the distinctions that divide the various sorts of religious language into distinguishable areas by relating derivative religious language to the cosmic disclosures and the primary religious language that generate and license them. After testing specimens of religious discourse using the first four rules, the criterion of consistency could be applied. But this criterion was applicable only to those sorts of religious language that met the first four tests.

The second set of criteria listed in Chapter Six illustrated the application of the next three formal criteria to religious language, instead of to metaphysical schemes, as they were applied in "Fact, Metaphysics and God." This set of criteria was discovered:

(1) Whatever model provides the most comprehensive and reliable discourse is to be preferred.

(2) Models which generate inferences more consistent with the rest of our religious language are to be preferred.

(3) Should criteria (1) or (2) yield no preference, the simpler model is to be preferred.[12]

The criterion "comprehensive and reliable" applied the rule of "comprehension" from "Fact, Metaphysics and God." The question asked in terms of comprehensiveness is whether a given model can hold together the various sorts of talk developed from a cosmic disclosure. Ramsey used the model of "redeeming love" to account for the various models for doctrines of, and discourse about the atonement, as the sort of model that could meet this test. This model and the discourse it licensed were seen as grounded in a cosmic disclosure that arose around the cross of Jesus of Nazareth.[13]

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[12] Cf. Chapter Six, 199, *supra*.

The second criterion correlated with the rule of "coherence" in "Fact, Metaphysics and God." This criterion is also met by the model of "redeeming love" that Ramsey advocated in *Christian Discourse* better than the other models there cited, *e.g.*, the "ransom theory." This criterion's proper question was whether the model related the diverse feelings, doctrines, and actions of the community consistently and concisely. A model that did this better than another was to be preferred.

The third criterion was nearly identical with the rule of simplicity in "Fact, Metaphysics and God." The difference here was that in the latter the criterion was expressed in terms of key words, and in *Christian Discourse* it is expressed in terms of models.[14] The similarity of application was that both grade in numerical terms: the fewer (models or key words) necessary, the better the scheme is. If, as Ramsey argued, a single model, the model of redeeming love, could account for the functions of a set of models, the single model was to be preferred.

These four criteria, consistency, coherence, comprehensiveness and simplicity, form a *metaphysical justificatory thesis*. It is not entirely clear which of the four (if any) Ramsey considered most important. In his later work, the criterion of simplicity seems to be applicable subsequently to the others; if more than one metaphysical system or realm of religious language (*e.g.*, Christian discourse) meet the first three criteria, then the simpler was to be preferred.[15] Other than this, no primacy of place can be ascribed to any of the criteria. All of them are important, if somewhat vague. However, there is another justificatory thesis that Ramsey used to help with the grading of any realm of religious discourse. The *empirical justificatory thesis* is a material criterion, distinguishable from the formal criteria that compose the metaphysical justificatory thesis.

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[13] Cf. Ramsey, *Christian Discourse*, Chapter Two.

[14] This development supports the contention of Chapter Five that the members of the category "key-words" were later in Ramsey's work taken into the category of "models."

II

As noted earlier in this chapter, the first development of the theory of empirical fit, Ramsey's empirical justificatory thesis, occurred in lectures delivered in 1963 and published in 1964 as *Models and Mystery*. In this book Ramsey defined empirical fit, with regard to a single model, in the following way:

> A model in theology does not stand or fall with, a theological model is not judged for its success or failure by reference to, the possibility of verifiable deductions. It is rather judged by its stability over the widest possible range of phenomena, by its ability to incorporate the most diverse phenomena not inconsistently. A particular model in theology, by contrast with the scientific case, is not now used to generate deductions which may or may not be experimentally verified. As a

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[15] Cf. Ramsey, *Christian Discourse*, 44-48.

> model in theology is developed, it rather stands or falls according to its success (or otherwise) in harmonizing whatever events are to hand. There are in theology, as opposed to science, no deductive derivations, emerging one by one, to confirm or falsify the theory which is on our lips. The theological model works more like the fitting of a boot or shoe than like the 'yes' or 'no' of a roll call. In other words, we have a particular doctrine which, like a preferred and selected shoe, starts by appearing to meet our empirical needs. But on closer fitting to the phenomena the shoe may pinch. When tested against future slush or rain it may be proven to be not altogether watertight or it may be comfortable--yet it must not be too comfortable. In this way the test of a shoe is measured by its overall success in meeting a wide range of phenomena, by its overall success in meeting a variety of needs. Here is what I might call the method of empirical fit which is displayed by theological theorizing...[16]

Later in *Models and Mystery*, Ramsey likened the criterion of empirical fit to the criterion that a psychiatrist could be said to use in the application of a psychological model to the understanding of a patient's behavior. In terms of the diagnosis "mild depressive" he developed this comparison:

> The question will now always have to be: Does this or that specimen of particular behaviour which I hear being reported by this particular person fit into my overall concept well or less well? In this way the concept 'mild depressive', when used personally, has empirical relevance, but it is never absolutely falsified or completely verified. Circumstances are enumerated until in a flash of insight the model fits the person and the 'fit' is then examined in relation to the widest possible pattern of his personal and social life.[17]

Ramsey went on to claim that application of psychological or social models to a person is justified in so far as the models continue to fit the person's behavior "in an ever-widening social and personal context, rather than in a scientific verification or falsification of deductions arising from them."[18]

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[16] Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, 17.

[17] *Ibid.*, 39-40.

In a discussion of *Models and Mystery*, Ramsey again elucidated this notion:

> This is *not* to say that theism is a scientific hypothesis... whose empirical success and reliability is measured by the extent to which the deductions made from it are experimentally verified. Rather is the theologian like the archaeologist or anthropologist or detective who sees how his theory "fits" a particular set of remains--though they may "fit" many other theories, and at certain points fit ill with the one being sponsored. But there can in particular be...no deductions whose verification or falsification are as crucial for the assertion that A loves B as they are in the case of experimental science. It is this much looser kind of "empirical fit" which is closer to the theological case.[19]

In another place the criterion of empirical fit served to help solve the problem of preference. In terms of the model "love" as applied to God, Ramsey wrote:

> There must be a pattern of empirical circumstances which fit "loving" discourse when used of God. Such a fit is pragmatic in the widest sense... The kind of empirical fit which provides a set of criteria for preferences between models is much more like the kind of fit which detectives look for between certain new clues and a "theory" of the crime with which they are provisionally working.[20]

Finally, the justification by empirical fit is not limited to single models. Theological systems, as well as the individual models incorporated in them, were to be justified by the criterion of empirical fit. This was made explicit in the context of a discussion of the 'competition' between personalistic and theistic views of the universe, where Ramsey claimed that the major justificatory question "will be about the multi-model discourse in each case, which is the more comprehensive and has the better empirical fit."[21]

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[18] *Ibid.*, 40.

[19] "Models and Mystery: Reply," 267.

[20] Ramsey, "Talking About God: Models, Ancient and Modern," 90.

The theory of empirical fit displays the weakness of the style of publication of Ramsey's work. While the above quotations display the direction he intended to take to lay out the theory, he never displayed all the elements of it in one place. The following analysis attempts to display all the elements of the theory.

The last quotation shows that the theory of empirical fit was closely allied to the criterion of comprehensiveness (part of the metaphysical justificatory thesis). This explicit alliance occurs only in the evaluation of systems of religious discourse which incorporate metaphysical claims, attitudes or stances.[22] The occurrence of this alliance shows that the material criterion, the theory of empirical fit, is not completely separable from the formal criteria that form the metaphysical justificatory thesis, especially in the evaluation of whole systems or families of discourse. In the interest of brevity, my analysis will discuss the theory as applicable to individual models and will only refer to systems of models when necessary for the analysis.

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[21] Ramsey, *Models for Divine Activity*, 64.

[22] Ramsey evidently believed that all religious 'systems' incorporated metaphysical claims since (by definition) they all are based in cosmic disclosures. The term "system" is used loosely here: a system need not be deductive. It may be a simple scheme of logically related or relatable utterances.

Ramsey claimed that a theological model was not judged in terms of its fruitfulness in generating verifiable deductions. Predictions, descriptions, and 'entities' entailed by a literal understanding of a model are prime types of bogus discourse. But since Ramsey did not construe models as literally descriptive, it follows that discourse based on these models should not be construed as descriptive nor be justified in terms of deductions from them. The empirical fit that theological models should display is like that of models applied by social scientists, which are not absolutely falsified or verified but are seen to be more or less adequate to understand the behavior of an individual or a group.[23] Although he did not make the point clearly, Ramsey implied that justification by empirical fit has at least two distinguishable stages.

Using his analogy of the shoestore, first comes the stage that can be called "choosing a shoe." In a well-stocked store a number of pairs may fit the feet to be shod more or less well. In this case, one's choice from among them will display a "high degree of personal taste."[24] This first choice is the state of *preliminary empirical fit*. But it should be noted that a greater number of shoes in the store simply will not fit, and cannot even be called a "poor fit." Attempting to place size 7B pumps on 12D feet is not a poor fit--it is no fit at all. Preliminary empirical fit may not be a hard and fast criterion, but even this "rough and ready" fix excludes some shoes. Some hypotheses, models, or theories simply do not work.

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[23] Cf. Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, 39-40, quoted above.

[24] Cp. McClendon and Smith, *Understanding Religious Convictions*, 44.

The analogy with theological models can be made clear with reference to J. C. A. Gaskin's article, "Disclosures."[25] Gaskin noted that in a given set of circumstances, *e.g.*, a traveler flying over a vast desert, reading or remembering *Paradise Lost*, glancing occasionally out the plane window, various types of disclosures may occur.[26] He suggested that a "theistic" or "*Paradise Lost*" 'disclosure' characterized by a sense of creaturely dependence on God may occur, or a "Lucretian" 'disclosure' characterized by an attitude of heroic despair may occur.[27] Both of these will display preliminary empirical fit in that both seem to fit the circumstances of human living. But no one speaker could consistently claim to have had cosmic disclosures characterizable in both ways.

In that it displays the "taste" or attitudes of the speaker, what one says about a cosmic disclosure situation will reveal something of one's character. Were the person in the plane a dedicated Roman Catholic missionary flying to his mission, the "Lucretian" claim and attitude would probably not occur. If it did occur, either it would be "out of character" or the missionary would be a rather different person than stipulated here. On the other hand, in these circumstances, it would

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[25] *Religious Studies* IX, No. 2 (1973), 131-41.

[26] Gaskin wrote "disclosures" but this is a mistake, on my view, for it uses "disclosure" to apply to the whole situation, whereas it applies properly only to the objective aspect of the situation. It is true that Ramsey sometimes used the term as Gaskin did. His imprecision has contributed to this misunderstanding. Gaskin should have noted that Ramsey did use the term in two different ways: properly, that to which one responds with discernment and commitment ("the disclosed"); loosely, as a synonym for the situation of disclosure-discernment-commitment. Cf. Chapters Three and Four above.

[27] Gaskin, "Disclosures," 137.

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also be rather odd for a disclosure to be spoken of in terms of the bucolic harmony of life. This sort of talk does not fit the facts and features of the situation.

This example shows that talk arising from a cosmic disclosure situation is characterized by two sorts of preliminary empirical fit. It must fit both the character of the speaker and the circumstances in which it arose. If it were not consistent with either of these, the model used to characterize what has been disclosed fails to display preliminary empirical fit.

That both of these criteria must be met can be shown by a comparison with the application of models in psychiatry. A patient displays certain behavior to the therapist. The therapist will attempt to understand that behavior in a manner consistent not only with that behavior, but also with the training that the therapist has received. Characterization of some patient as a "mild depressive" when the behavior of the patient has been self-destructive, *e.g.*, a suicide attempted by ingesting a massive overdose of drugs, will fail to do justice to the facts and features of the situation. The personality of the patient may be characterizable in terms of models derived from many of the schools of psychology. But even though some models not derived from psychological theorists may be able to account for the behavior, *e.g.*, a Thomist model of the soul, these are excluded at least because the psychiatrist is not trained in using such a model. It is as odd for a therapist to talk of "agent intellect" as for a missionary to talk of "heroic despair." Likewise, it is as odd for suicidal behavior

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to be characterized as "mild depressive" as for the life seen in the Sahara to be characterized as "bucolic harmony." Models that fail to be adequate to account for the facts and features of the situation or to be consistent with the character and training of the speaker thereby fail to display preliminary empirical fit.

This analysis of the two aspects necessary for preliminary empirical fit accords with the first part of Ramsey's characterization of empirical fit: "...we have a particular doctrine, which...starts by appearing to meet *our empirical needs*."[28] What has been displayed here is that such a doctrine is both "ours" and "one that fits the situation." As noted in Chapter Four, whether a given model arises in a situation characterizable as a spectacular "ice-breaking" type of disclosure, or characterizable as the more staid "light dawning slowly" type, does not matter. According to the criterion of preliminary empirical fit, what matters is that a given model harmonizes the facts at hand and is consistent with the character of the speaker.

Should a model meet the preliminary criterion, it can then be tested for *continuing empirical fit*. This is the stage of testing the shoe against slush and rain and of noting whether or not a shoe pinches, of checking remains to see that a theory accounts for some archeological facts, of evaluating a model's adequacy in wider contexts. An adaptation of Gaskin's example will serve to illustrate this.

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[28] Ramsey, *Models and Mystery*, 17. Emphasis added.

Assume that a young missionary on the way to his first mission did in fact interpret such a disclosure theistically, "inspired" by *Paradise Lost*. The further events of his life in the mission field would be understood either to conform to or not conform to this model. His work could either be interpreted by or not be interpreted by this model. If this model is an articulation of a cosmic disclosure and does express or is congruent with the missionary's ultimate commitment,[29] then this model can be tested for empirical fit by seeing to what degree the events of the missionary's life conform to or are interpretable by this model.

To continue the story: it is now some thirty years later. The bright-eyed young priest has become a stoop-shouldered relic. The missionary again flies over the same desert, again with a copy of *Paradise Lost*. Another disclosure situation occurs, but this one is discerned atheistically: the work of three decades is futile, wasted, useless; a life offered *ad majorem dei gloriam* is now understood as having been offered *ad majorem* nullius *gloriam*. It does not matter to our story whether it suddenly dawned on the aged laborer or whether a different pattern slowly appeared in the events of his life. What matters is that either the events that had formed nearly a lifetime of work did not conform to the *Paradise Lost* model, or that the tired oldster is characteristically different from the fresh youth he once was, or (quite conceivably) both. The change in models may be caused by a number of psychological or physical factors, but the critical point is that the events that formed his life no longer fit the original model and the commitment it expressed.

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[29] Cf. Chapter Five, 151-56.

To change the story a bit, imagine the wizened one to have had no new disclosure or perhaps one that enabled him to "see again" and "reaffirm" his commitment. The events of a lifetime of work did conform to the *Paradise Lost* model, and the old man is "the same man" as the fresh youth who thirty years previously flew the same route. In this case, the model met the criterion of continuing empirical fit.

A third alternative can be imagined: the old missionary may return convinced his work was for the greater glory of God, although he discarded the *Paradise Lost* model about the same time he wore out his first pair of shoes. The pattern seen in events has changed: the struggle is no longer for the Paradise that once was and is to be, but for a Paradise that never was and yet might be. This is a "Teilhardian-Omega" model, a disclosure understood under the model of the earth evolving into God and Godliness by responding to the call of God. The *Paradise Lost* model did not withstand the challenge of empirical fit, but another model that better accounted for the phenomena replaced it. In the case in which a new model has been substituted for one that did not meet the test of continuing empirical fit, what do we say of the character of the missionary? It seems too little to claim either that he is or isn't "the same man." We need a longer story, a biography, to find grounds for either claim. A stereotype will not suffice. However, this third alternative makes it plausible that a change in model can occur without a change in character if the latter model supersedes and incorporates the former, rather than completely replacing it. However, someone whose character has undergone a revolutionary change can hardly have the same model for his new commitment as for his old one.

These examples illustrate that the criterion of *continuing empirical fit* involves both the "attitude" or "character" of the holder of a model and the events that are understood through the use of the model. Both of these aspects operate in Ramsey's theory of empirical fit. It seems that the facts and features that display one's character are more important for preliminary empirical fit, and the facts and features of situations represented in models more important for continuing empirical fit. In any case, both phases have to deal with both sorts of facts. What, if any, distinctions are to be drawn between these two sorts of facts is not entirely clear.[30]

The criterion of empirical fit is not identical to the criteria that form the metaphysical justificatory thesis. Models for God, models that express one's ultimate commitment and fundamental discernment, can be graded, taken away, superseded, reformed, or replaced on social, psychological, and empirical bases as well as on rational and metaphysical grounds. These material contexts, the events of an individual's or a community's everyday life, are the locus of justification by empirical fit.

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[30] It may be that the events and actions of one's life disclose the 'fact' of the individual's character and the facts and features of situations may disclose the 'fact' of the character of the ultimate. C. B. Cohen has claimed that "we can postulate that Ramsey has used perceived fact as a model for disclosed fact," in "Some Aspects of Ian Ramsey's Empiricism" (5). In view of my discussion in Chapter Two, section two, and Ramsey's discussion, "Facts and Disclosures" (not considered by Cohen), this seems to be incorrect.

This discussion shows that Ramsey viewed justification by empirical fit as an ongoing task. On the grounds presented here, there is no possibility of *conclusive* empirical fit. However, a model may be so broad and so well-ensconced in a person's or community's religious discourse that, for practical purposes, it is justified. One such model is the personal model for God in the Christian community. Yet this model is subject to some change as understanding of the concept of persons evolves. Even a metaphysical theory which meets the criteria that form the metaphysical justificatory thesis is subject to justification by empirical fit. If a metaphysical system is unable to account for or to fit a given set of events, or if it is not consistent with the character of some individual community, then it is "dead." In attempting to account for the life and death of models and systems in concrete yet rational terms, Ramsey's empirical justificatory thesis became something of a hybrid combining a number of criteria.

The problem with the thesis as Ramsey presented it is its vagueness. Once those models that positively do not fit are excluded (as 7B shoes are for 12D feet), a number of models and systems of models seem to display empirical fit in that they harmonize events. The notion of character, which I have emphasized in discussion of Ramsey's theory, and especially the relations between character and models, convictions, and images, is not clear.[31] It seems that changing one's models for God may not entail a change in one's character, yet that one's model for God is an important constituent in one's character. Conversely, a change in character may not entail a change in the model for God, but one's character is at least partly constituted by his model for God. Sorting this out is an important task, but one that cannot be undertaken here. At this point, the concept of character and its importance for empirical fit must await further developments.

However, there is a related theme that rarely appeared in Ramsey's published works: theology must begin and end in life. Ramsey's lifestyle expressed this theme that is one of the obscured foundations of his intellectual work. In the Burney Prize Essay for 1938 Ramsey claimed that a theory which systematizes religious experience "...must also provide and co-ordinate such penetrating general ideas e.g. the idea of this spirituality of the individual which shall be able to enrich, and indeed to call forth, religious experience in the future."[32] In mimeographed notes from his Cambridge days, it is noted that the test "by their fruits you shall know them" could not be made more searching. He also claimed there that

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[31] The notion of "character" is receiving much-needed attention in theological circles in the United States. I am indebted to Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1975) and J. W. McClendon, Jr., *Biography as Theology* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974) for insight into the importance of character in philosophy and theology.

[32] Ramsey, "The Concept of the Eternal" (unpublished typescript), 160-61.

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philosophy "must culminate in life itself."[33] In 1966 he claimed that empirical fit is a theory "pragmatic in the widest sense."[34] Succinctly, Ramsey was claiming that what an individual (or community) believes is expressed in his (its) life. Hence, the quality of a person's or community's life reflects the quality of his or its beliefs; the justifiability of a life reflects the justifiability of beliefs. Since Ramsey never explored the theme of the relationship between life and belief at length, and since this relation can help to sharpen the criterion of empirical fit, it will be explored in the next chapter.

This chapter has shown that Ramsey's theory of the justification of religious language is not limited to empirical fit. In addition to an *empirical justificatory thesis* which appeared late in his writings, there is also a *metaphysical justificatory thesis* which appeared throughout his works. The empirical thesis was discovered to be somewhat more complex than is apparent on first sight, consisting of two different sorts of criteria (a "character" criterion and a "consistency with the facts" criterion) and having two different types of application ("preliminary" empirical fit and "continuing" empirical fit). The metaphysical or rational thesis (the more consistent, coherent, comprehensive and simple a system or family of discourse is, the better it is) was discovered to be distinct from the empirical thesis and also from a *general defensive thesis*. Both the empirical and metaphysical theses serve to exclude some models and systems of models on material and formal grounds, respectively. Both theses share the weakness of being vague. They do not offer criteria precise enough to grade models and systems of models that meet their criteria fairly well. The weakness of these theses reflects one aspect of the problem of preference in Ramsey's work, one of the problems to be treated (and solved, if possible) in the next chapter.

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[33] Ramsey, "An Outline of Christian Philosophy" (mimeographed, n.d.), 39.

[34] Ramsey, "Talking About God: Models, Ancient and Modern," 90.

CHAPTER EIGHT

PREDICATION AND PREFERENCE

The two problems that present difficulties for Ramsey's theory are the problems of predication and preference.[1] The problem of predication involves these sorts of questions: Doesn't qualifying a model in order to talk of God abrogate any connection between the straightforward model and the 'logically-odd' qualified model? If there is no connection between everyday language and talk of God, how can sense be made of the latter? If there is a connection, what is it? For instance, if "infinitely good" has no connection with "good," what can it mean? If it has connections, what are they?

The problem of preference is implied in these sorts of questions: Given that there are a number of relatively adequate models or systems of models based on a cosmic disclosure situation, how does one choose among them? How does one evaluate conflicting ultimate claims? The solutions to either problem are not straightforward.

I

Ramsey never solved the problem of predication explicitly, but he did give indications of the way in which it could be solved. In a situation of cosmic disclosure, a person responds to the objective aspect of that situation with discernment and commitment. In *Religious Language* Ramsey had claimed that one without the other is indicative of an infelicitous response to a disclosure; commitment without discernment is bigotry and idolatry and discernment without commitment is insincerity and hypocrisy.[2] He went on to compare this sort of discernment-commitment with the response to another person which is "falling in love." When a person in love sees the other as "my beloved," both commitment and discernment are necessarily involved. If the other weren't discerned as my beloved, no sort of loving commitment would be in order. Conversely, if I claimed that the other was my beloved and yet that I was not committed appropriately to her, my discernment or my commitment would be suspect.

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[1] Cf. Chapter Five, section one.

Although the avowal "I love you" is not a scientific statement, it nonetheless has 'cognitive' content. One may be wrong about the emotion ("I thought I loved her but I was only infatuated"), about the person ("I thought I loved her, but I know now I loved her sister") or about the character of the beloved ("I loved a sweet woman; but she was a shrew. I was wrong about her"). The ways that one discovers that one is wrong (or reaffirms that one was right) are rarely 'scientific.' Ramsey's discussion of the "falsification" of love follows:

> When people comment adversely on someone you love, it is a measure of your love as to how far you will resist the tales told to weaken your affection. But if in the end they succeed, the result is, not that we exchange without any heart-searching, one sort of 'axiom' for another--there is now a personal revo-

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[2] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 19.

> lution, the whole of one's life is altered, we are 'converted', our 'vision' ceases. Here is something *precisely parallel to religious commitment*. If we have not been converted to it, we should certainly have to be converted out of it; converted, as William James would have said, 'to infidelity'; when the world becomes 'flat'--lacking in 'depth'; *vision and commitment disappear together*.[3]

The discernment and commitment disappear together because they are logically connected. If the other is seen only as another person and is no longer properly called "my beloved," then both the commitment and the discernment necessary to love are gone. The discarding of such a model for the relationship "flattens" things; the "depth" of the relationship is lost--both the penetrating discernment and the intense commitment are gone. The end of love is the loss of discernment and of commitment. Falling in love is construed as the acquiring of both; falling out of love is the loss of both. A state that has one without the other is inconsistent at best, dishonest at worst.

The disclosure situation in which God is discerned is parallel to a disclosure situation in which the "beloved" is discerned. The response in a cosmic disclosure situation, like the falling-in-love situation, cannot consistently be in terms of discernment or commitment alone. Both must be present. But in the falling-in-love situation, the connection between the discernment and commitment is not problematical. But what of the connection in a situation which is characterized by the avowal "God is *infinitely* loving"? What sort of commitment can be attached to

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[3] *Ibid.*, 40-41. Emphasis added. A similar point could be made for the "evidence of one's senses" as he made for "resisting the tales."

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or part of the discernment? If the qualification of the model "love" by the qualifier "infinite" evokes a situation of cosmic disclosure (or is the linguistic outcome of such a situation), it must be that the appropriate commitment is also characterized by the qualifier "infinite." As Ramsey put it, "So we are religious as a *total* commitment to the *whole* universe..."[4] This sort of commitment--"infinite commitment"--is as odd from the point of view of everyday 'commitment language' as its accompanying discernment is from the point of view of everyday 'discernment language.' This sort of commitment implies that no matter how fully one is commited, that commitment is not complete. One can only approach infinite commitment, as increasing the number of sides of a polygon can only approach a circle. Just as the discernment of and commitment to the beloved appeared and disappeared together, so the discernment of God as "infinitely loving" and the commitment to be loving and grateful "always and everywhere" appear and disappear together. If one had no discernment of God as "infinitely loving," one would not have this sort of ultimate commitment; if one did not have this sort of ultimate commitment, one could not discern God as "infinitely loving." Both of these are logically connected. In virtue of this connection, Ramsey could later claim that similarities in discernment or commitment might highlight previously unsuspected similarities in commitment and discernment between the theist and the sensitive humanist.[5]

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[4] *Ibid.*, 41; emphasis in original. Compare Jonathan Edwards' definition of the nature of true virtue as "benevolence to being in general" in *The Nature of True Virtue* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1960; first edition, 1765), 3.

[5] Cp. Ramsey, *Models for Divine Activity*, 63-64.

In his writings Ramsey stressed the notion of commitment. He rarely, if ever, specified the sort of commitment that would be appropriate in conjunction with a given discernment. Generally, the sort of commitment that would be congruent with discernment of God as infinitely *n* would be the sort of commitment that would be appropriate for the discernment of another person as *n*, but qualified. For instance, claiming that God was infinitely merciful (discernment) would entail an attitude of infinite gratitude; infinitely powerful would entail infinite awe; creator of heaven and earth would entail an attitude of absolute dependence. The qualified commitment, what Ramsey called the total commitment to the whole universe, would mean that one was (respectively) grateful for everything, awed that anything exists,[6] or that everything exists, and acknowledged one's dependence on the rest of creation and its creator.[7] That the sort of commitment entailed by a given discernment cannot be precisely specified is no more a problem for religious language than it is for any other sort of language. Ordinarily one is grateful for a merciful act; however, there are circumstances in which one may resent a merciful act. However, if an act is discerned as merciful, it is inconsistent to respond flatly ("The king pardoned me and saved me from the gallows, but I don't care, for it makes no difference to me"). Extraordinarily one may resent God discerned as creator of all, but it is incongruous to claim that that discernment has no effect on one's attitudes.[8] Whatever commitment one has is linked to the discernment one has, whether discernment-commitment is a response to an everyday experience or to a cosmic disclosure. If the discernment is qualified as "in-finite," so must the commitment be "in-finite," *i.e.*, nothing is excepted from that fundamental commitment.

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[6] Cp. Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, 6.44.

[7] Cp. F. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, proposition 4.

Ramsey claimed that God was met in situations in which one takes (or receives) an ultimate stance, whether consciously or unconsciously, gradually or shatteringly. If someone has no fundamental discernment or ultimate commitment, that is, if one never was involved in a cosmic disclosure, he cannot justifiably say anything about God. Utterances one issues are models that 'approach' God, as increasing the number of sides in a polygon makes that polygon 'approach' a circle.[9] God, the objective aspect of a cosmic disclosure, cannot be captured in model language, as a circle cannot be captured in polygon language. Rather, God is that to which all models point. With this sort of understanding, one can see why Ramsey claimed that problems and inconsistencies that arose in discourse developed from models, were understood as a problem about language, rather than a problem about God or God's relations to whatever else there is.

This approach to "God" parallels Ramsey's approach to "I" as discussed in Chapter Two. Just as "I" systematically eludes all observa-

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[8] Cp. McClendon and Smith, *Understanding Religious Convictions*, 42 for a contrary discussion of Ramsey's account.

[9] Cf. Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 78; and *The Problem of Evil*, 25.

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tion language, so does "God" systematically elude all straightforward language. Just as whatever "I" refers to is to be talked of in terms of models,[10] so that to which "God" refers is to be talked of in models. In a serious and sustained manner, Ramsey followed his general rule, "'I' will never cease to be a useful guide for us when we are confronted with puzzles about 'God.'"[11] The rule, based on the above, for ascribing any attribute to God is: Predicates can be ascribed to "God" as predicates are ascribed to "I" and "other selves."

For instance, consider the attribute "good." To claim that a person is good (to ascribe "goodness" to a person) does not entail that the person will perform *any* specific good act or that *every* act he performs is "good." Rather it (at least) declares and expresses the speaker's approval of the person.[12] The claim that "God is infinitely good" declares and expresses the speaker's approval of (commitment to) whatever occurs (discernment) *no matter what.*

Should a person be seen to cease to perform "good" actions (discernment), one would cease to call him a "good" person (commitment). In this case "good" would no longer display empirical fit. Alternatively, one might find that "good" is not the exact attribute: it may not be comprehensive, simple or coherent enough, and another attribute may fit better: a person may be "holy," "generous," "just," "fair," etc. Similarly, if one could no longer approve of *whatever* occurs in the world in a way ascribable to God, one would not discern God as "infinitely good." This sort of approach is exemplified in Ramsey's manuscript, "The Problem of Evil":

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[10] Cp. Ramsey, "Human Personality," *passim.*

[11] Ramsey, *Religious Language*, 43.

[12] If "good" does more than express approval, so much the better.

> It will be clear that I would not speak so easily or disparagingly as does Marcel of evil which is only 'stated' or 'observed', or of a philosopher who is merely 'an observer seeking explanations'. I think, as I have said, that we cannot 'explain' evil adequately without facing it, and that this is the logic of answers to the problem of evil, which are in any way adequate... It is not enough to say that the problem of evil is solved when we have a consistent map reference in relation to a re-created cosmic affirmation. The youth, dying of the disease, would certainly not be satisfied unless the theistic map which enabled him to keep his theistic affirmation and that unitary cosmic loyalty both center on his actual suffering at the disclosure point. It will not be enough, as it would be for the observer of evil, to find God in some cosmic affirmation around some element of evil, and to have associated with that discernment a consistent map. His very suffering must itself have revealed God.[13]

If one can "accept" one's suffering and see that it fits (perhaps with some difficulty) a universe in which God is talked of as "infinitely good," then ascription of infinite goodness to God is in some sense justified. If one did not understand suffering as an occasion for a disclosure of God, then one could not justifiably ascribe infinite goodness to God because one would not approve actions ascribed to God.

Two further problems arise in this sort of solution to the problem of predication and the "problem of evil" which is the major form of this problem for Christian theism. First, what actions are ascribable to God? It would seem that any event is ascribable to God for any event can be the occasion of a cosmic disclosure, a situation in which God is encountered. The claim that God acts in any and every event is, however, as uninformative as the claim that all persons are dishonest (or sinners, or liars, etc.). This claim offers no criteria for deciding which people to deal with, or which people may be "less dishonest" than others. Similarly, the claim that God acts in every event (though it may be as true as the claim that all people are dishonest) offers no criteria for deciding which events are informatively ascribable to God.

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[13] Ramsey, "The Problem of Evil," 58. Cp. *Religious Language*, 91-100 where Ramsey deals with the problem of evil in a similar manner.

However, very few events are actually discerned as cosmic disclosure situations. Since it is Ramsey's claim that God is met in such a situation, it follows that a person can meaningfully represent an event as an action of God if and only if that event is one in which someone's ultimate commitment and fundamental discernment arises or is sustained. If an event occurs that does not give rise to a cosmic disclosure or sustain an individual's ultimate commitment and fundamental discernment, an individual is not in a position to represent it meaningfully as an action of God because he or she has no way of telling whether or not God was to be met in that event (except insofar as every act is uninformatively ascribable to God). It also follows that if an event is the ground for or basis of a cosmic disclosure what one says about it is subject to testing for adequacy according to the metaphysical and empirical justificatory theses.

This sort of claim would seem to give rise to a fideistic stance.[14] This is not the case. As shown in Chapter Four, any person with an ultimate commitment (even A. G. N. Flew) has by definition been the discerner of a cosmic disclosure. As noted in Chapter Five, when "God" is used to name that which is other than oneself in a cosmic disclosure situation, the term is "meaningless" without further specification, *e.g.*, predication of attributes. It is right to claim that only those who have had a cosmic disclosure are in a position to know what one is--but that claim is identical to the claim that only those who have a fundamental discernment and ultimate commitment are in a position to know what those are, not that the claims that articulate the discernment-commitment are assessable only by those who have similar or identical 'disclosures.' In fact, the various criteria that form the justificatory theses discussed in the previous chapter and the further criteria to be discussed in the following section offer ways to assess ultimate claims. A cosmic disclosure is not a self-authenticating experience, as some have suggested. Ramsey's theories include ways to assess such claims as well as possible, so his stance cannot be called irrationalist or fideistic.

Having shown that the problem of predication was based in a misunderstanding of his thought, the problem of preference remains to be discussed. Given that there are numerous articulations based on cosmic disclosures, which is to be preferred? Some are eliminated by the metaphysical justificatory thesis. Others are eliminated by the criteria of empirical fit. However, no single model or system of models meets all of the metaphysical criteria perfectly.[15] Many do justice to the facts, features and events of this world more or less well. When these criteria are applied,inadequate metaphysical systems and systems or families of religious discourse are ruled out, but the question still remains, "How does one choose among the relatively adequate ones?"

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[14] Cp. William H. Austin, "Models, Mystery and Paradox in Ian Ramsey" in *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* VIII (Spring, 1968).

II

In the discussion of Ramsey's theory of empirical fit we have seen that the criteria Ramsey explicitly developed do not adequately solve the problem of preference. There are two further criteria that can be developed from Ramsey's work in order to supplement the metaphysical and empirical justificatory theses. Neither of these criteria are thoroughly explored by Ramsey. Both are different from the sorts of criteria presented in the previous chapter.

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[15] This is not a logical claim, but rather an empirical one. Most metaphysical systems will meet some of the claims rather well, but no system will be totally coherent, comprehensive, consistent and simple. Monism is simpler than pluralism, but pluralism is more comprehensive than monism. Whiteheadian philosophy may be comprehensive, but it is not simple and may not be as coherent as positivistic philosophy. Although using slightly different criteria (scope and precision) Stephen C. Pepper in his *World Hypotheses* (Berkeley: University of California Press and London: Cambridge University Press, 1942) found that some hypotheses were relatively adequate, but that among these none was far superior to another. While some system may prove to meet all the criteria better than any other, no system that I know of does so, an opinion, I should add, shared by few, if any, metaphysicians.

I shall label the first *the rule of "efficacy."* This notion has to do with the purpose for which a qualified model is used. Simply, a model that has evoked and does evoked cosmic disclosures is to be preferred to a model that hasn't evoke or has ceased to evoke further cosmic disclosures. This rule will be developed from hints given by Ramsey in the context of a discussion of sacramental theology in a lecture given in 1963.

I shall label the second a criterion of *final empirical fit.* Although Ramsey did not develop this explicitly, some indications are given in his works that show the continued relevance of some insights in the thought of the eighteenth century American philosopher-theologian Jonathan Edwards. Final empirical fit will offer criteria for the assessment of the authenticity of an ultimate claim.[16] An "authentic" ultimate claim can then be assessed in terms of its "truth." The criteria discussed in this chapter will also help in assessing the truth of an ultimate claim, although that will turn out to be neither easy, straightforward, nor demonstrable on purely rational or intellectual grounds.

A rule of efficacy was developed by Ramsey in the context of sacramental theology in his Alden-Tuthill lectures at the Chicago Theological

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[16] I shall use the term "ultimate claim" to refer to the expression of one's ultimate commitment and fundamental discernment. By definition, an ultimate claim arises in a situation of cosmic disclosure.

"Authenticity" seems a preferable term to "sincerity" or "genuineness." It implies that the claim is not only "genuine," *i.e.*, not phony or misstated, but also fundamental. It implies not only that it is "sincere," *i.e.*, believed to be true, but part of one's character. Ramsey's uncertainty about this word is displayed in *Religious Language*, 23-25, 43-44, but more precise terms are not exactly right, as I've suggested.

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Seminary in 1963. In the third lecture, "A Logical Exploration of Some Christian Doctrines,"[17] Ramsey distinguished between criteria for determining the validity and the efficacy of sacraments. "Sacraments," Ramsey claimed, "exhibit and center around certain external and visible signs which on our view will have the logical status of models."[18] In the *Thirty Nine Articles* of the Anglican Church, however, the bread and wine of the eucharist and the words and water of baptism are said to be "'sure witnesses and effectual signs.'" This seems inconsistent with Ramsey's 'tentative' approach: "*It looks as if such sacramental doctrine demands models which guarantee disclosures.*"[19]

But on looking more closely at the matter, Ramsey claimed that "Baptism" does not describe an event. "It rather forms part of an utterance made in such circumstances as give it what the late Professor J. L. Austin of Oxford called 'performatory [*sic*] force.'"[20] That is, if the words are said by the proper person in the proper context, the water of baptism is intended to evoke a disclosure of what happened to Jesus when he was baptized by John in the Jordan river. Traditionally, baptism is also said to seal the person being baptized into the church and into Christ. Ramsey suggested that the seal of baptism is better understood as a sealing (an action) rather than as a seal (a 'thing,' such as what results from the impression of a ring in soft wax). In light of this consideration, he further noted that "it is very significant that for Augustine the 'seal' or 'character' conferred by way of Baptism amounted to nothing by way of testable benefits, unless the man was in communion with the Church."[21] But this leads to the further question, "Where is the Church?" Ramsey did not answer that question directly but noted that the "question of efficacy will never be answered short of a relating of Baptism to a full Christian life where no part either of life or the Gospel is left untouched." He continued by claiming that the concept "efficacy" is not "important because of any immediate guarantee it confers... But...if efficacy is something of which none of us can ever be sure, validity is; validity is simply a matter of recognizing certain well-tried, well-trusted routes to the particular disclosure."[22] He claimed further that validity of a sacrament (model) is "a matter of observable, visible or audible criteria."[23]

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[17] in *The Chicago Theological Seminary Register* LIII, 5 (May, 1963). Only the first two lectures were reprinted in *Christian Empiricism*.

[18] *Ibid.*, 30

[19] *Ibid.*, 31. Emphasis in original.

[20] *Ibid.*

The distinction between validity and efficacy is illustrated by the doctrines of the eucharist and baptism. Specifically, Ramsey noted that empirical validity does not guarantee spiritual efficacy. If the correct matter and form are used with the proper intentions by the proper person, the Church recognizes a sacrament as valid. "It means that it conforms to what has been through the ages a *recognized route to a disclosure of God in Christ*."[24] There may be some hindrance which prevents a sacrament (model) from being efficacious (leading to a disclosure). For instance, a eucharistic service administered by a heretic is not valid because the person presiding at the rite had no right to do so. Yet those who have been validly baptized, later lapsed from, and finally returned to the faith are not baptized again. The problem with those who have lapsed and returned is not that the baptism was invalid. Rather, it was "the failure of the lapsed to prove the efficacy of Baptism in terms of *a consistent pattern of thought and behavior*."[25] This distinction between validity and efficacy, while not drawn precisely by Ramsey, is suggestive of a further criterion to be applied to models.

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[21] *Ibid.*, 32. [22] *Ibid.*

[23] *Ibid.*, 33. [24] *Ibid.*, 34. Emphasis added.

First, the criteria governing the validity of either a sacrament or model can be specified easily. A valid theological model is (a) based on a cosmic disclosure situation; (b) sustained by a community; (c) qualified so as not to be taken as a literal description; (d) intended to evoke further disclosures (directly or indirectly). A valid sacrament is (a) based in the disclosure of God in Christ; (b) part of the tradition of the Christian community; (c) performed with the proper matter and form; (d) intended to be a rite (as opposed to a rehearsal, for instance) in conformance with the practice of the community.[26] If these conditions are fulfilled, a sacrament is said to be valid. The various ecclesiastical regulations that govern the administration of sacraments can be understood as specifications of these general conditions.[27]

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[25] *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

[26] These criteria are drawn from the article cited, especially p. 34.

[27] As noted previously, new models can and do arise. Since this is not a dissertation on sacramental theology, the implication that new sacra-

What the similar rules listed above imply is that just as a model can be formally valid without evoking a cosmic disclosure, a sacrament can be valid without being spiritually efficacious. Yet there seem to be two sorts of "efficacy" involved in this discussion, One sort, that an efficacious sacrament is followed by a consistent pattern of thought and behaviour, will be discussed later. The other sort is a pragmatic sort of efficacy that shows the relationship between validity and efficacy.

A valid sacrament conforms to a "recognized route to a disclosure of God in Christ."[28] A valid sacrament is one that has been efficacious and recognized to be so. Similarly, a valid qualified model arises from a cosmic disclosure situation. But *does it* evoke further disclosures? This question is not a logical question: the logical criteria for distinguishing a valid theological model included the intention to evoke further disclosures. It is an historical question, and one which implies a criterion of preference. That is to say, a model that has evoked and still evokes cosmic disclosures is to be preferred to one that hasn't evoked further cosmic disclosures.

This 'pragmatic' criterion seems obvious. However, we have seen in Chapter Five that the fact that some otherwise valid theological models

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ments may arise will not be discussed, except to note that I think Ramsey would have claimed (a) all Christian sacraments lead to the same disclosure; (b) each is a different route to that disclosure; (c) although new 'routes' might be discovered, the claim that new sacraments were discovered is one that needs clarification. It is not clear just how Ramsey would have clarified that claim.

[28] *Ibid.*, 34.

do not always evoke cosmic disclosures does not count against Ramsey's theory. The rule of efficacy develops the basic theory discussed in Chapters Five and Six by showing one more approach to the problem of preference and by developing some of the criteria that distinguished primary from derivative religious language. Whether his historical claim that sacraments are recognized on the grounds that they represent recognized routes to disclosures is accurate or not, is not the point. Those models that do evoke disclosures are preferred to those that don't and are situated "higher in the hierarchy" of religious language. A model that evokes no "sense of the unseen," ranks low on the scale of preference for talk of God and low in the hierarchy of religious language.

As noted near the end of the previous chapter,[29] Ramsey roughly endorsed a pragmatic theory of justification. Two of Ramsey's forebears in the English-speaking tradition of philosophy, Jonathan Edwards and William James, have offered insights that can find a comfortable home in Ramsey's work. Using these will make explicit Ramsey's implicit criterion of *'final' empirical fit*.[30]

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[29] Cf. pp. 230-1, above.

[30] Ramsey's connection with Edwards is tenuous. Both men, though separated by two centuries, were profoundly influenced by Locke. Edwards' similarity to Berkeley has been noted by Perry Miller, *Jonathan Edwards* (n.p.: William Sloan Associates, 1949), esp. 60-61 (although Miller's understanding of Berkeley differs significantly from Ramsey's) and by Ramsey in his review of D. J. Elwood, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Columbia University Press and London: Oxford University Press, 1960) in *Journal of Theological Studies*, N.S., XIII, 2 (October, 1962). Ramsey's own position is also Berkeleyan. I do not know how much of Edwards Ramsey read.

Ramsey was influenced by and cited James in a number of places, relying on "The Will to Believe" (*Religious Language*, 40-41, 151) and the *Varieties*

Jonathan Edwards had defined "affections" as "the more vigorous and sensible exercises of the inclination and will of the soul."[31] He enlarged on this definition and gave examples of the affections:

> As all the exercises of the inclination and will, are either in approving and liking, or disapproving and rejecting; so the affections are of two sorts; they are those by which the soul is carried out to what is in view, cleaving to it, or seeking it; or those by which it is averse from it and opposes it.
>
> Of the former sort are love, desire, hope, joy, gratitude, complacence. Of the latter kind are hatred, fear, anger, grief, and such like...
>
> And there are some affections wherein there is a composition of each of the aforementioned kinds of actings of the will...[32]

Edwards went on to argue that "true religion, in great part, consists in the affections,"[33] and that love is "the chief of the affections and the fountain of all other affections."[34] The arguments for these claims were based on his reading of the Scriptures and on his understanding of the general use of the term "religion." He wrote:

> If we ben't in good earnest in religion, and our wills and inclinations be not strongly exercised, we are nothing. The things of religion are so great, that there can be no suitableness in the exercises of our hearts, to their nature and importance, unless they be lively and powerful. In nothing is vigor in the actings of our inclinations so requisite, as in religion; and in nothing is luke-warmness so odious.[35]

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of Religious Experience (an edition of this was in his library and donated at his death to a college library). Rather than attempting to assess further similarities between Ramsey and James or Edwards, I intend to develop the criterion.

[31] Jonathan Edwards, *A Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, in Three Parts* (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1746). Citation to Edwards, *Religious Affections*, ed. John E. Smith, Volume Two of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 96.

[32] *Ibid.*, 98. [33] *Ibid.*, 99.

[34] *Ibid.*, 106. [35] *Ibid.*, 99-100.

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Unless one's religious affections are strong and vigorous one's religion is suspect; lukewarm inclinations are inconsistent with 'true religion.'

In light of this discussion, Edwards went on to infer that both those who believed religion to consist in affections alone and those who believed affections to be irrelevant to religion were wrong. He summarized his position in a magnificent sentence:

> As on the one hand, there must be light in the understanding, as well as an affected fervent heart, where there is heat without light, there can be nothing divine or heavenly in that heart; so on the other hand, where there is a kind of light without heat, a head stored with notions and speculations, with a cold and unaffected heart, there can be nothing divine in that light, that knowledge is no true spiritual knowledge of divine things.[36]

But it was not sufficient for Edwards to say that someone who seems to have both "light and heat" has true religion. He continued in *Religious Affections* by distinguishing between those affections that may or may not be evidence of true religion, and those that are distinguishing signs of true religion.[37] Edwards formulated twelve distinguishing signs of truly gracious affections, the twelfth of which he called the principal sign:

> Gracious and holy affections have their exercise and fruit in Christian practice. I mean, they have that influence and

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[36] *Ibid.*, 120.

[37] I will not list either the twelve indeterminate signs or the twelve determinate signs here. In an unpublished paper ("Jonathan Edwards' *Religious Affections*: An Analysis," June, 1972) I claimed that only a part of the second set was valid (*i.e.*, nos. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 7, 12; possibly 6, 8, 11). The others were invalidated internally on the grounds that they could not (or possibly could not) be distinguished from the indeterminate signs. The sign with which I shall be concerned here (12) is not internally invalidated.

> power upon him who is the subject of 'em, that they cause that a practice, which is universally conformed to and directed by Christian rules, should be the practice and business of his life.[38]

Edwards drew three implications from this: that the behavior of the believer in the world be *universally* directed to Christian rules, that the believer make a business of holy practice *above all things* and that this sort of behavior is the business of the believer's life "*through all changes*, and *under all trials, as long as he lives*."[39]

In this sign and in the others, Edwards displayed what James would call the "cash value" of the religious affections. A life, that above all, universally and through all changes, exhibits a given affection, thereby exhibits the authenticity of the affection. A life that does not do so shows that the affection imbedded in it is not "from God's grace," that it is inauthentic. Especially in this "principal sign" Edwards distinguished authentic religious affections from ones that may or may not be genuine in terms of the universality of the affection.

The set of commitments that can characterize responses to cosmic disclosure situations (according to Ramsey) overlaps the set of affections (according to Edwards) that characterize the religious affections. Using Edwards' thesis, then, an analogous "cash value" of a religious commitment on Ramsey's terms can be spelled out. If a person, committed in a given way, leads a life that exemplifies that commitment "above all things, in every way, and through all changes," his commitment can legitimately be said to have arisen in a cosmic disclosure situation. This "total commitment to the whole universe" is one that is congruent with or displayed in the life of the person. If it is not such a commitment, then the person's claim to have had a "cosmic disclosure" is unjustified.

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[38] Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 383; cf. 406.

[39] *Ibid.*, emphasis added.

But, as shown above, the response to a cosmic disclosure situation is not in terms of commitment alone but also in terms of a discernment logically connected to that commitment. Should a person's life display or be congruent with a given commitment, the life also shows the "cash value" of the discernment. The fact that some theists do appreciate that some humanists live "good lives" (and vice versa) gives grounds for Ramsey's claim that there may be similarities "which might not have been suspected between the theist's and the humanist's quest and attitude..."[40] These similarities are not to be discovered only in terms of commitment (say, an unselfish dedication to making the world a better place in which to live). Individual discernments, however verbally dissimilar, may also display similarities when they are assessed in terms of this sort of cash value. The problem of which commitment-discernment is to be preferred as being more accurate and useful as a representation of a "cosmic disclosure" will be "about the multi-model discourse in each case, which is the more comprehensive and has the better empirical fit."[41] I contend that the cash value in terms of actions is another sort of criterion for the

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[40] Ramsey, *Models for Divine Activity*, 64.

[41] *Ibid.*

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evaluation of discourse based on cosmic disclosures, discourse that expresses fundamental discernments and ultimate commitments, and that this is the sort of criterion which Ramsey implied.

A number of elements make up this criterion of *final empirical fit*. The first element is authenticity. Should someone claim, for instance, that God is infinitely gracious and yet *not* live a life that always and everywhere exhibits his gratitude, the claim that he makes for his fundamental discernment and ultimate commitment is suspect on the grounds that his life does not exhibit the authenticity of the claim. If the commitment appears to be insincere, the discernment that is associated with it will seem incredible. Edwards' argument for the relation between action and preference in affections and beliefs is germane here:

> Thus it would be ridiculous for a man to plead, that the commanding act of his will was to go to the public worship, while his feet carry him to a tavern or brothel house; or that the commanding act of his will was to give such a piece of money he had in his hand, to a poor beggar while his hand at the same instant, kept it back, and held it fast.
>
> ...Reason plainly shews that...what men will actually cleave to and prefer in their practice, when left to follow their own choice and inclinations are the proper trial what they do really prefer in their hearts... The main and most proper proof of a man's having an heart to anything, concerning which he is at liberty to follow his inclinations, is either to do or not to do as he pleases, is his doing of it. When a man is at liberty whether to speak or keep silence, the most proper evidence of his having an heart to speak, is his speaking. When a man is at liberty whether to walk or sit still, the proper proof of his having a heart to walk, is his walking. Godliness consists not in an heart to intend to do the will of God, but in an heart to do it.[42]

It would be equally ridiculous for a person to claim that God was infinitely gracious while his actions did nothing to show his gratitude to God. If a person's actions do not display an appropriate commitment, either his associated discernment is dubious or his construing of a given claim as ultimate was mistaken or hypocritical. In either event, the claim is inauthentic.

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[42] Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 426-27.

Second, final empirical fit involves a criterion of truth. An authentic fundamental belief, sincerely held and appropriately expressed in action, may be true or false. If the claim is not authentically ultimate, if it does not function as the basis of one's actions, it is faulty and the question of further assessment in terms of its truth need not arise. As Edwards noted, it would be ridiculous to try to discover the "truth" about a person's claims if his actions belied them. The claim to discern God as infinitely gracious is likewise self-defeating if one's life displays no affect or commitment associated with that claim. Assuming a claim not to be so defeated, how is it to be further evaluated?

Ordinarily the checking of the truth of a claim is fairly straightforward. One checks the truth of the claim "It is raining here and now" by looking out the window (if one is indoors), by standing away from building and trees and seeing if one gets wet, and by other mundane tests. Generally, one can check an everyday sort of claim that arises in an everyday situation in everyday ways. But how can one check a claim that is ultimate, that arose from a cosmic disclosure situation? Assessing the truth of claims involves getting into the proper position, *e.g.*, going or looking outdoors to check on the weather.[43] But how does one get into a position to check an ultimate claim? *The position to do so is what Ramsey called a cosmic disclosure situation.* Aside from the fact that such situations are apparently rare, getting into such a position is getting into a position in which one receives or discovers his ultimate discernment and fundamental commitment. If one speaks of what one has come upon in such a situation in the same way as another person does, one may reasonably believe, *ceteris paribus*, that the other's claim is reliable. But the fact that differing claims arise from cosmic disclosure situations presents a problem: how does one find out which articulation is true (or more nearly true) if one has differing reports from people who got into position to assess an ultimate claim?

Part of the answer to this will involve further use of the metaphysical and empirical justificatory theses and the rule of efficacy. If these criteria do not offer sufficient grounds on which to base a decision, then the sort of life that the believer lives offers a 'final' criterion by which to assess the reliability of the claim he makes. *The performance of the believer indicates the reliability of his authority for his claim.* This criterion involves deciding whether or not someone's life or character is good or happy, an assessment that will display a high degree of personal taste. In some ways this is an evaluation that may well (some would claim *must*) involve not only one's "intellect" but also one's "passions." William James, for one, argued:

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[43] One is not in a position to assess the claim "It is raining" if one cannot perceive the rain or infer it from one's perceptions, *e.g.*, if one were in a soundproof, windowless, air-conditioned basement bomb shelter. That it is raining or not cannot be assessed from that position.

> Our passional nature not only lawfully may, but must, decide an option between propositions whenever it is a *genuine option* that cannot by its nature be decided on intellectual grounds; for to say under such circumstances, "Do not decide, but leave the question open," is itself a passional decision--just like deciding yes or no--and is attended with the same risk of losing the truth.[44]

James defined a *genuine option* as one that is *living* (a choice between two hypotheses each of which makes *some* appeal for belief), *forced* (so that one cannot escape the horns of the dilemma presented), and *momentous* (when the opportunity is unique, the stakes high, or practically irreversible if the decision is later seen as unwise).[45] As a pragmatist and empiricist James was not especially concerned with the source of a belief, but rather whether it was true, that is, "if the total drift of thinking continues to confirm it."[46] He discovered that two fundamental presuppositions of thinking have their ground in emotion, not in what is believed as certain on the ground of sufficient evidence:

> Two first steps of passion you have indeed had to admit as necessary--we must think so as to avoid dupery, and we must think so as to gain truth; but the surest path to those ideal consummations, you will probably consider, is from now onwards to take no further passional step.[47]

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[44] William James, "The Will to Believe" (originally published in *New World*, June 1896), reprinted in *Essays in Pragmatism* (New York: Hafner Publishing Co., 1954), 93. Emphasis added.

[45] *Ibid.*, 90.

[46] *Ibid.*, 99

[47] *Ibid.*, 101.

Sometimes these two desires are in opposition. Sometimes, too, there are situations in which one cannot wait for evidence to ground a purely rational decision:

> Are there not somewhere forced options in our speculative questions, and can we (as men who may be interested at least as much in positively gaining truth as in merely escaping dupery) always wait with impunity till the coercive evidence shall have arrived? It seems *a priori* improbable that the truth should be so nicely adjusted to our needs and powers as that.[48]

There are situations in which avoiding decision due to lack of evidence determines one's future as well:

> To take a trivial illustration: just as a man who is in a company of gentlemen made no advances, asked a warrant for every concession, and believed no one's word without proof, would cut himself off by such churlishness from all social rewards that a more trusting spirit would earn--so here, one who could shut himself up in snarling logicality and try to make the gods extort his recognition willy-nilly, or not get it at all, might cut himself off forever from his only opportunity of making the gods' acquaintance.[49]

In the latter case, to avoid decision determines the direction of one's future life. If such a decision has been made in the past, that decision *has determined* one's life. It is James' thesis that we have a right to believe a claim without adequate evidence (1) if it is grounded in a situation that calls for choice between live hypotheses, (2) if it is a dilemma, and (3) if its consequences are not trivial. We have the right to decide because any decision on inadequate evidence, even a decision 'not to decide' is a passional decision. Of course, such decisions may lead to falsity rather than truth, to tragedy rather than happiness. The problem with this Jamesian pragmatic criterion is that it doesn't say how we are to know that truth and performance do, in fact, converge.

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[48] *Ibid.*, 102. It may also be that there are cases in which *coercive* evidence never will be found for an hypothesis.

[49] *Ibid.*, 107.

But in deciding a claim in this sort of situation, there is a guide. Ramsey has argued in an article on the authority of the church that a "person by displaying his behaviour pattern...thereby and in so doing exercises authority."[50] The sort of behavior (or performance) he exhibits indicates the sort of authority he is. Although Ramsey was primarily concerned with "commissioned" authority (*i.e.*, the sort of authority that ambassadors, headmasters, bishops, etc., have as a result of their commissioning), this insight applies to anyone who expresses and believes in an ultimate claim. In the same paper, Ramsey also distinguished the "authority of facts" from "the authority of persons," arguing that the latter was an important supplement to the former:

> So the concept of authority...which attributes ultimate authority either to "facts" or, better, to agreed conceptual schemes held as part of one's commitment to the universe, has to be supplemented by the concept of authority inhering in a person, and this authority is exercised when the person is active, and in particular, when he is active in a certain role.[51]

Although the major thrust of this paper was an argument that the spiritual authority of the Church should be exercised in a persuasive (rather than an authoritarian) way, his suggestions for the ways in which the Church could regain its persuasive power were based on the presupposition that the authority of what one says is displayed in one's performance.

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[50] Ramsey, "The Authority of the Church Today," 70.

[51] *Ibid.*

The lives of those who have made an ultimate claim serve as a guide to the reliability of that claim. A person who discerns the universe as a cold place where there is nothing but what he and his colleagues make, will live a life of heroic despair if he is honest and consistent. A person who cannot decide on or discern a pattern in the evidence that confronts him will live an indeterminate life displaying no fixed character. A person who discerns God as infinitely loving will live a life of gratitude for everything. Deciding or discovering which sort of life is better, happier, truer, more productive, etc., is not easy. But Ramsey has taken a decision that James allowed to the passions--and thus to be justifiably arational--and shown that there are exemplars whose lives serve as an authority to demonstrate reasonably the significance and the outcome of living out ultimate claims. "A person by displaying his behaviour pattern... thereby and in so doing exercizes authority."[52] The whole life of one who believes that God is infinitely loving shows the value of that claim.

"Yes, yes, but is it *true*?" the tough-minded sceptic will ask. Ramsey claimed that the pragmatic test, "By their fruits you shall know them" is the best evidence.[53] If knock-down demonstration is necessary for a justifiable truth claim, then the truth of an ultimate claim cannot be known, at least 'this side of the grave.'[54] However, if a claim can be

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[52] *Ibid.*

[53] Cp. Edwards, *Religious Affections*, 406ff, where the claim is made that the best evidence is the practice of the believer.

[54] If it is the case that no claim can be justifiably asserted to be true since every claim can be doubted, that an ultimate claim cannot be known to be true is merely an instance of the general rule.

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justifiably affirmed to be true if the best evidence is obtained (the performance of those who hold this claim), if the claim is believed and that belief is evinced in practice, and if the claim counts as representing a state of affairs (a claim that can be assessed by the empirical and metaphysical justificatory theses),[55] then the criteria set out in this and the previous chapter function as criteria for assessing, as well as possible, the truth of ultimate claims.[56]

The tough-minded sceptic must answer his own question. If his answer is not based on coercive evidence, it will be as "passional" an answer as the believer's. If it expresses his ultimate commitment, it will be subject to the criteria discussed here. But, although he will be subject to the consequences outlined by James in his discussion of "genuine options," Ramsey's final answer, in terms of his doctrine of cosmic disclosures, his doctrine of theological development with its emphasis on disclosure models and tentativity, his doctrine of the justification of ultimate claims by empirical, metaphysical, and pragmatic theses, offers him guides to his own belief as well as guides to assessing the beliefs of others.

Ramsey recognized that the criterion of truth is an elusive criterion. Sometimes it is difficult to find truth, more difficult to utter it, and most difficult to live it. Because of these difficulties, he developed some explicit ways of guiding the evaluation of ultimate claims (in terms of their genesis, expression, and consequences) and insisted that while one might be sure in religion, one had to be tentative in theology.[57] While not all the criteria developed in this chapter are derived explicitly from his thought, they are consistent with it (at least) and may be implied by it (at best). These criteria supplement it at points where his thought was not completed or well-developed. When the full implication of his metaphysical and empirical justificatory theses are laid out and supplemented by the rule of efficacy and the criterion of "final" empirical fit developed here in relation to Edwards and James, I contend that this theory of the justification of ultimate claims is as complete as possible and that individual criticisms made by previous commentators have been met. The task that remains is one of general evaluation, to which the next chapter is devoted.

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[55] That qualified models are representative was shown in Chapter Five.

[56] Cp. Searle, *Speech Acts*, 66, column 2.

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[57] Alternatively, it could be claimed that he accepted a version of what McClendon and Smith have called the "fallibility principle." He held that one's ultimate claims are always subject to rejection, reformulation, improvement or reformation. Cp. McClendon and Smith, *Understanding Religious Convictions*, 118.

CHAPTER NINE

ON BEING TENTATIVE IN THEOLOGY

The characterization of the intellectual journey of Ian Ramsey is now complete. All of the criticisms made of his thought have been addressed; an interpretation of the whole has been constructed in a manner consistent with his expressions and intentions. This final chapter will summarize the themes I have dealt with into two basic sets, those that remained relatively constant throughout his journey and those that changed. I shall then be in a position to draw some conclusions on the usefulness and adequacy of Ramsey's work.

I

The constant themes in Ramsey's work are those in which he followed Berkeley. Ramsey's notion of the self, of God and of the world as 'divine visual language' remained basically unchanged throughout his work. The ways in which he talked of each of these, however, evolved as part of his journey from idealism to empiricism.

The self, as discussed in Chapter Two, was always understood as more than Hume's distinct perceptions that formed a bundle. In his early work Ramsey had claimed that the self could be described in terms of the data of mind, body, and a "Timeless Self" which taken together could offer an understanding of an individual's personality. With a new awareness of the virtues of empiricism, occasioned by Gilbert Ryle's *The Concept of Mind,* he no longer spoke of these data, but rather noted that the self could not be described, but that awareness of it could be evoked. Descriptions of behavior, of actions, and of events did not suffice to account for the Humean "feeling" of personal identity. That feeling could only be accounted for using a logic of notions to emphasize the peculiarity of self-awareness, a peculiarity that could not be accounted for in terms of the data (what Ramsey had earlier called the abstractives of mind and body) alone. Awareness of self could be disclosed through the data as an effective, integrating activity that is unique for every individual in being owned by that person. The data alone could not account for the actor acting, but could provide, as he claimed in his 1971 paper "Human Personality," the pattern through which that activity could be disclosed. This notion of the self was not of a metaphysical substance (although some would understand it that way) but of "an integrating *activity*, an activity expressed, embodied and scientifically understood in terms of its genetic, bio-chemical and endocrine, electronic, neurological and psychological manifestations."[1] Ramsey always understood the self as more than what could be described in terms of an individual's behavior; the manner of expressing the content of that "more" became more precise as his journey evolved.

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[1] Ramsey, "Human Personality," 128. Emphasis added.

Ramsey's notion of the world in his early work is akin to Berkeley's "divine visual language." The world was "a divine inn, giving us opportunity to meet God and our fellow-men."[2] In the divine inn of the world we encounter our fellow men and God. In his final paper to the Aristotelian Society in 1972, he noted that we "may sometimes reach relatively stable and agreed interpretations and contexts,"[3] *i.e.*, agree on the "facts of the matter" in many cases, but that these are not what is primary. The primary awareness is "what is more than the facts and features of the world;" what is more than is descriptively available.[4] It is that which the disclosures disclose: God and selves. In encountering God and other people we meet activity--the encounter is a dually active one.[5] The facts and features of the world are not ultimate--our perceptions of this everyday empirical world are always subject to correction and improvement. What is ultimate is the world as a world. But the everyday empirical world is not to be despised. For instance, Ramsey could make no sense of "direct inspiration" that bypassed the facts and features of the world. Although he rarely wrote of it in these terms, the world for Ramsey was a sacrament, an outward and visible sign of the presence of God. However, the world was more than that--the world was the *necessary* sign of God. Without a world as a world, God could not be encountered. That some could not "see" the presence in the world, as some could not "see" a unified self, was a fact that was not to be opposed (as he had once apparently thought) but a fact that had to be the beginning point for evoking a "vision of the unseen."

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[2] Ramsey, "An Outline of a Christian Philosophy," 24.

[3] Ramsey, Facts and Disclosures," in *Christian Empiricism*, 175.

[4] *Ibid.*

[5] Ramsey, *Models for Divine Activity*, 61.

The content of that "vision" was in all ways corrigible. God, as the objective aspect of experience of the world, could only be called personal if "there occur, whether deliberately generated or not, cosmic situations of a disclosure kind, whose patterns are isomorphous with disclosures of a personal reciprocity."[6] In his early work, it seems never to have occurred to him that there could be a non-personal God; he simply assumed that the God who could be discerned through and in the facts and features of the world would be in some sense personal. Yet since on his own terms every characterization of a disclosure was corrigible, he had to argue for a personal God and for the justifiability of ascribing personality to God. The content of the notion of God was always personal for Ramsey. But while this was assumed in his early work, it became clear in his later work that his account of religious language required an argument for the personality of God, or at least for the justifiability of talk of God in personal terms.[7]

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[6] Ramsey, "A Personal God," 65.

[7] I suspect that we owe this argument to Ninian Smart. In January, 1965 he called Ramsey a "virtual atheist," ("The Intellectual Crisis of British Christianity," *Theology* LXVIII, 535). In 1966 Ramsey published "A Personal God," one of his few articles not evidently based on an oral presentation.

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The conviction that Ramsey confessed in 1969, "that in isolation and by itself a plain empiricism would not be sufficient either as an account of the world or of humanity,"[8] remained constant throughout his life. The ways in which that basic conviction was expressed, however, changed from proposing an idealistic alternative to plain empiricism to expanding plain empiricism to a broadened empiricism. Berkeley's notions helped to focus Ramsey's conviction, although his view of notions changed as his thought evolved. His theory of language and especially his theory of language about God underwent significant change.

As noted in Chapter Four, Ramsey's conception of the relation of experience and language underwent a significant change in the nineteen-fifties. In 1951, the various descriptive languages, *e.g.*, science and history, were said to be related to experience by different degrees of abstraction.[9] In 1953, the various languages were each construed as levels or floors of a department store that needed words that worked at all levels to complete them and that spoke of a "fact" more fundamental than any facts described by the various languages.[10] In 1955, the lectures that were later published as *Religious Language* proposed to relate talk of God to a certain sort of experience, the cosmic disclosure situation. A metaphysical investigation, "Fact, Metaphysics and God," was to be correlative with the investigations of *Religious Language* and of the concepts of *Freedom*

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[8] Ramsey, "Fullness of Life," in *All One Body*, 58.

[9] Cf. *Miracles*, and Chapter Four, above.

[10] Cf. "Theology and Language: Some Illustrative Examples."

and Immortality. In 1959, Ramsey showed the possibility and purpose of a metaphysical theology without building a metaphysical system. After 1960, the key-words, *i.e.*, those words that provided the "lift" to the levels of the department store of knowledge, of both metaphysics and theology were abandoned. His intellectual journey involved a change in his mode of work. He stopped working as a metaphysician and began focusing on the philosophical problems of religious language and discovering the necessary and sufficient conditions for justifiable religious language.

One condition for the justifiable religious use of language was now said to be the occurrence of a cosmic disclosure situation. A second was that the language based in such a situation could not be simply descriptive, but must express both discernment and commitment. The third was that this was best expressed in terms of qualified models. I have discussed these conditions in Chapters Four and Five.

Although it might seem that Ramsey's vision contracted as his work progressed, we have seen that this is not the case. In his last years in Oxford, he continued his exploration of the themes of religious language in a number of publications which focused on tracing logical pathways in derivative religious language and on discovering the ways in which religious language could be justified. The metaphysical concerns that had occupied much of his early work were not totally abandoned, but Ramsey became content with showing the metaphysical implications of his position and with showing that an empirical metaphysics incorporating Berkeley's notions was possible. Ramsey's vision had not lessened, but he saw that the task of staking a claim for faith did not entail articulating a metaphysical system, but only showing the metaphysical conditions for making such a claim. These later tasks and the positive connections they had with earlier work were discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. In Chapter Eight we also saw how the major problems in Ramsey's work could be overcome and discovered that some insights of earlier thinkers could flower again in the context of Ramsey's theories.

I have accounted for the data mentioned in the introduction as posing problems for the understanding of Ramsey's work. His early description of the individual in terms of the "Timeless Self" and the abstractives of mind and body was eliminated as he clarified the logic of Berkeley's notions. The early claim that metaphysics provided a "kata-language" composed of integrator words so that metaphysics could adapt (but not adopt) scientific words remains an interesting hypothesis. However, in so far as it was unnecessary for his task, Ramsey abandoned constructing a "kata-language," and demonstrating an explicit relationship of a metaphysical scheme to a family of religious language. The evolution of Ramsey's theories about language and experience account for the different attitudes (possibly contradictory, certainly contrary) he expressed at various times about language and for some of the contradictory or contrary categories in which his interpreters have placed him. The discussions of "key-words" and of the relation of the qualified models to that of which they speak account for the varying importance (both psychological and logical) of the term "God" in Ramsey's thought.

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I have also accounted for the criticisms made of parts of Ramsey's thought. It is now clear that Ramsey was not attempting to develop an ontology of the unobservable. Rather, he attempted to show the necessity of accounting for some unobservables in terms of notions in order to speak adequately of humanity, the world, and God. The content of those notions is always open to correction, not only in principle, but in fact. Although he did at one time make some attempt to construct an alternative metaphysical system, he did remain faithful to his empirical foundations in almost all of his published works. That he attempted to extend the range of vision of narrow empiricism by logical and psychological arguments is not a fault of his work, but its virtue. In so far as he was successful, he showed that such narrow empiricism is an untenable position.

In showing the bases for and scope of his thought, I have also shown that Ramsey was more than a logician of theistic language. He was a full-scale philosopher of religion. He was committed to staking a claim for (but not describing the content of) the indescribable faith dimension. As part of this task, he worked not only to display the logic of religious language, but also to show the experiential foundation and the reasonable justification of such language. His theories accounted not only for talk of God in the Christian tradition, but also for the genesis, use and justification of any ultimate claim.

II

The general conclusion of this study is that Ramsey presented a philosophy of religion, entailing a theory of religious language, that was more coherent and comprehensive than any previous interpreter has seen. This conclusion was reached by unearthing evidence that previous commentators did not take into account. Ramsey presented a consistent theory of religious language that accounted for the grounding, use and justification of such language. By doing so, his work helps to make questions of understanding and assessment independent from practically insoluble metaphysical debates. While all arguments about religion may not be limited to the justification of one's or one's community's beliefs in the face of the contrary beliefs of another individual or community, there are few (if any) that do not have the justification of beliefs as an important part of the question. By attending to language, significant progress can be made in the understanding and assessment of religious beliefs and ultimate claims. One of the best illustrations of this was contained in the initial paragraphs of Ramsey's unpublished monograph, "The Problem of Evil":

> Traditionally, the problem of evil has been regarded as the major problem for theism. Here, without doubt, is the most severe challenge that belief in God has to face. People ask: why does God allow it? Why does God permit the pain, the suffering, the tragedies with which the world abounds?
>
> The usual answer has been to try to justify the ways of God to men: to elaborate a theodicy. But today we are suspicious of such attempts. Philosophers of religion do not see themselves as substitutes for God, giving the answers which God alone could give. The philosopher of religion has a more sober view of his task. What he tries primarily to do is to justify men's language about God and to make it as consistent, comprehensive, simple and coherent--in other words, as reliable--as possible. So I shall not presume to answer the question: Why does God allow it? I shall rather face the question: How does the believer in God incorporate into his story talk about the evil in the universe?[11]

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[11] Ramsey, "The Problem of Evil," 1. John Hick, in his theodicy *Evil and the God of Love* (London: Macmillan, 1966), focused primarily on justifying beliefs rather than on justifying God, although he sometimes appeared to be doing the latter.

This discussion in particular focused on an answerable question: Can talk about the evil in the world be incorporated into a coherent scheme of discourse along with talk about God as almighty, omniscient, and infinitely loving? I find this way of doing philosophical theology tactically preferable to a way that requires one to answer a question for which there are no grounds on which to base an answer: "Why did God do it?" Even if a consistent, comprehensive, simple, and coherent answer could be formulated to that question, how could one get into a position to check it? Surely Antony Flew and I couldn't walk up to God to ask him, as we could walk up to another person to ask why he did something. One can, however, assess an answer to the proper question about language in terms of the criteria laid out in Chapters Seven and Eight. "Why did God do it?" seems to imply that it is possible to get into position to ask him or to get into position in some other way to assess that claim. By focusing on questions of language and belief, Ramsey's work enables one to avoid any attempt that seems to force one to check uncheckable facts. It is also clear that one must be able to account for checkable facts, so it is not a position that entails fideism or one that, in the present instance, encourages one to ignore the obvious facts of evil in the world.

A further virtue of Ramsey's position is that it involved a certain tentativity in (even) one's most cherished beliefs. That such a tentativity is desirable has been a commonplace of philosophy.[12] However, the fact that it is logically possible for any of my (non-analytic) beliefs to be

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[12] Cf., *e.g.*, McClendon and Smith's discussion of the "fallibility principle" in *Understanding Religious Convictions*, 118, 182, and *passim*.

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wrong does not entail that any of them are wrong, nor that it is necessary (rather than useful) to hold a principle of fallibility or tentativity as a fundamental belief. Ramsey's theory shows that such a principle is a necessary correlative and corrective to any and every religious belief or ultimate claim. If no articulation can be completely adequate, then every articulation is subject to reformation, improvement, and, possibly, rejection, no matter how ardently it is held. That Ramsey's claim for tentativity does not imply the problematic attribution, that any belief is as good as any other, is shown by the ways in which the articulations of those beliefs can be assessed. On Ramsey's theory, the holding of a form of the fallibility principle is not only a useful principle, but necessary to any utterance of an ultimate claim.

Even if some judge the weaknesses of Ramsey's thought more severely than I have done here, and even if further investigations show that the shape of his thought is different in some details than presented here, many of the specific virtues which I have highlighted will remain intact. His notion of the self as agent accounted for subjectivity without the necessity of introducing a metaphysical soul. His notion of experience as encounter showed the inadequacy of beginning either with sense-data or with the Cartesian *cogito* as a basis for epistemology. His discovery of the situation in which ultimate claims are grounded, and his representation of that situation as a cosmic disclosure, grounded the possibility of assessing competitive ultimate claims without resorting to traditional metaphysical debates. The logical connection of discernment and commitment as a response to (or the subjective aspect of) a cosmic disclosure situation has been shown to overcome many of the alleged problems in his thought. His uses of the term "meaning" have been clarified to show that he did not have a referential theory of meaning. My analysis of Ramsey's theory of qualified models shows that their function as evocative is only one of five functions. I have brought out the fact that the term "God" functions in two different ways in Christian discourse, and that these ways are not inconsistent with each other. Ramsey's theory of religious language accounts not only for talk of God, but other sorts of religious language as well. Finally, Ramsey's three justificatory theses, general, metaphysical and empirical, have been explored and a further criterion of assessment has been developed congruent with the first three theses. All of these contribute to showing how Ramsey could rightly claim that one could be sure in religion, but must be tentative in theology.

I do not claim that every aspect of Ramsey's thought has been dealt with here. His work on ethics, his arguments for immortality, his understanding of "history," and other aspects of his thought have received little mention because they are subsidiary to the main problem of understanding the scope, basis and shape of his thought. Lengthy discussion of these subsidiary themes here would have made this study far too long and obscured its main points.

If Ramsey's thought is understood as presented in this study, there are no holes in its fabric. There are, however, some places at which the fabric is thin. First, Ramsey's work on derivative religious language (discussed in Chapter Six) needs further specification in two areas. While

I have been able to extract the rules which guide the development of derivative religious language and which weed out bogus discourse, it is neither clear just how he would have applied them to all the various sorts of language reasonably called religious, nor whether these rules are sufficient. Further studies are needed to strengthen or repair Ramsey's work at this point.

Second, Ramsey's religious epistemology and its relation to a general epistemological theory is not clear. He is certainly an instrumentalist with a minimum ontological commitment. However, that only generally defines his position. Precisely where he stood on epistemological questions and why he stood there are problems that require further study.

Third, Ramsey's investigations and samples of religious discourse were primarily drawn from the Judaeo-Christian tradition. Although, as I have suggested near the end of Chapter Three, many of the religious traditions of the world *could* be accounted for by Ramsey's theories, he rarely attempted to account for non-Christian religious language. Nor is it obvious that a Ramseyan account would be the best account that could be given of the ultimate claims and derivative religious language of other traditional religions or of the "secular religions" such as popular Marxism. The question that remains is not whether his fabric covered this question, but how comprehensive that covering is.

Fourth, Ramsey's relation to the English-speaking tradition in philosophy is not entirely clear. While he certainly was influenced by Locke, Berkeley, Butler, Hume, James, Bradley, Ewing, Oman, Moore, Russell, Wittgenstein, Ryle, Austin, Strawson, Hare, and Whitehead, his appropriations of these sources and the importance of each thinker's influence on him has not been investigated comprehensively.[13] Whether a detailed investigation of these sources would yield significant information on his development or not, I do not believe that it would substantially affect the shape of his theory as I have presented it.

Besides the above weaknesses (or possible weaknesses) in Ramsey's thought, at least one further informative task needs to be undertaken. An adequate biography is needed. In the sketch that forms Chapter One of this study, I have indicated how noting one of his fundamental beliefs helps to focus the picture of his life. A proper biographical interpretation could yield material for understanding his own religious and ecclesiastical beliefs and actions, as well as reflecting the importance of his thought for his life, and perhaps clarify further some aspects of his work. This sort of investigation can realistically be undertaken only when Margaret Ramsey opens Ian's journals to investigation and study.

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[13] C. B. Cohen has analyzed Ramsey's use of Butler and Bradley to some extent in "The Logic and Ontology of Ian Ramsey's Theology of Religious Language," but primarily to show that Ramsey 'misused' them. The Rev. J.J. McCluskey has noted Ramsey's roots in Bradley and Ward in "Theology and Disclosure Models: An Interpretation and Critique of Ian Ramsey's Writings." N. O. Schedler has noted Ramsey's similarities to Austin Farrer in "Methodology in the Metaphysics of Theism: A Philosophical Analysis of Austin Farrer and Ian Ramsey." Jerry Gill has noted similarities to some fellow-travellers in both his dissertation and *Ian Ramsey: To Speak Responsibly of God*, although many of the references there are not clearly substantiated. D. D. Evans has noted Ramsey's use of some points from W. V. O. Quine in "Ian Ramsey on Talk of God." I have concentrated on his Berkeleyan roots and noted his reactions to Ryle, Russell, and to a lesser extent to Whitehead.

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I have already pointed out the strengths of Ramsey's work. These are summarized in his claim that one can be sure in religion, but must be tentative in theology. The virtues are, in my opinion, numerous. It commits one to the task of clarifying and justifying his own beliefs and those of his community. It commits one to understanding the actions of one's community in an attempt to evoke a sense of God more surely and represent ultimate claims more adequately. It commits one to accepting that the teachings, doctrines, ethos, actions and beliefs one and one's community hold *are* important, though *not* ultimate. It finally commits one to noticing that what is left is all that matters: "I answer.... *God*."[14]

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[14] Ramsey, *On Being Sure in Religion*, 21.

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The dating of this is discussed in the text (cf. p. 100, *supra*).

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This essay is a composite, typed at several different times, and is, for practical purposes, unable to be dated precisely, although parts of it most likely originate from as early as 1954 to as late as 1961. Revisions of parts of it appear in print as "The Systematic Elusiveness of 'I'," "On the Possibility and Purpose of a Metaphysical Theology," and (possibly) "Berkeley and the Possibility of an Empirical Metaphysics." Other parts of it parallel discussions of models and qualifiers in *Religious Language*. Copies of some pages were also found among lecture notes dating from the late 1950's.

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In addition to the above, there are numerous letters, lecture notes, sermon notes, and other miscellaneous items preserved among Ramsey's papers. I studied them in a luggage room in Auckland Castle, although plans were being made to transfer the material to the custody of the diocesan archives in Durham.

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